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MIRANDA;
A MIDSUMMER MADNESS.

BY
MORTIMER COLLINS.

VOL. III.

“Why, this is very midsummer madness.

* * * * *

Though this be madness, yet there 's method in 't.”

—SHAKESPEARE

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1873.

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MIRANDA ;

A MIDSUMMER MADNESS.



CHAPTER I.

RAGGET.

“One thing we are not always taught at school :
A thorough scoundrel is a thorough fool.”

ON the following day, Tix was up early, and had seen a good deal of Bristol before his wife was thoroughly awake. She liked matutinal dozing, easy and lazy—to lie and think what you will do all day, and enjoy the thought thereof. Tix was too restless for this.

“He is such a nuisance,” Ella would say ;
“he gets up at what I call the middle of the

night, and goes off in search of adventures. He 'll come back murdered one of these days, I believe."

When he was out on this special morning, he examined analytically Miss Waddams's shop in Park Street, just waking up for the day. Presently he saw the Waddams herself descend to look after her shop-girls. An early riser evidently, and a good woman of business. Tix, always prompt, walked into the shop, where a good many things were sold beside the staple manufacture, and bought a dozen pair of gloves that would fit the Viscountess. The Waddams herself served him.

"Can I speak to you a moment in private?" he said, his purchase completed.

"O yes," said Miss Waddams, and showed the way to her customary parlour.

"I am too abrupt, I fear," said Tix, when they were out of reach of the shop-girls; "but I like to go to the point. I am Lord Tixover—you may have heard of me. I am a good deal laughed at in the newspapers because I like to defend women in difficulty."

"O, I know you well, my Lord," said

Miss Waddams, who loved a lord from the bottom of her heart, and had read many of Tixover's adventures in her favourite weekly paper, *Lloyd's*.

"Ah!" he said, "that clears the way. Would you mind coming to lunch with me at the 'White Lion Hotel' to-day, at two o'clock? My wife will be there. I have a particular reason for asking you, which is connected with my desire to protect ladies from insult."

Miss Waddams could not refuse a peer, and was indeed rather curious to know what sort of luncheon a peer would give her. She accepted. She had visions of possible orders from Lady Tixover.

"Two—sharp," said Tix to himself, as he ran down Park Street and up the short ascent into College Green. "The old lady will be punctual, I'll swear. I feel uncommonly like a *Deus ex machina*. When I have breakfasted—for which procedure I am quite ready—I must go and find this villain Ragget."

But, before he breakfasted, he had a talk with Jane, and felt convinced her story was abso-

lutely true. Then at breakfast he said to Ella, whom he had a wicked wish to surprise—

“I have invited a lady to lunch with you at two, Lady Tixover. She’s only a dress-maker. Will you receive her?”

“Of course,” said Ella; “what’s her name?”

“Waddams.”

“Goodness!”

“Fact, really,” said the Viscount. “Don’t know how it was invented. However, I want her in connection with my plot against this fellow Ragget, and I think she will be very useful.”

“I’ll be angelically civil to her,” said Ella. “I am awfully fond of dressmakers when they abstain from the evil practice of sending in their bills.”

Breakfast over, Tix went into the adjacent hostelry to get particulars about Captain Ragget. Soon found, without asking questions. Tix knew the method of suggestion. He had only to set the barmaid chattering, and she told him everything she knew, and probably several things more. One thing soon found was that Captain Ragget always

came in at about one o'clock, and seldom left till two or three.

"Capital!" thought Tix; "I have fixed the very time."

He lounged about the portal of the "White Hart" till Ragget arrived. It was a day of some excitement, for a cracked Welsh draper, who then infested Bristol (and who now infests some other place), was selling ponies. Yet Ragget came with laudable punctuality (or, shall we say, praiseworthy timeliness?) for his iced-sherry, his favourite drink in the morning.

Tix was there. Tix knew him at once. Tix was equal to the event.

"Captain Ragget," says the Viscount, "surely you remember me. I was Jack Brag out in South America. Don't you recollect?"

Ragget looked perfectly puzzled. He had knocked about with a good many people, and, for aught he remembered, his new acquaintance was one of them. He was perplexed. The Viscount stimulated him with a bottle of champagne. The wine at the "White Hart" is very good and very well iced. Ragget

began to believe that Tix was the most intimate friend he ever had in his life.

“Come and lunch with me presently,” said the Viscount, “I am staying at the ‘Lion,’ and I ordered lunch at two, and there are a couple of ladies with me. What do you say?”

“I say you’re a jolly good fellow,” says Ragget. “I’ll come, with all the pleasure in life.”

And he came.

Dr Tachbrook and O. O. were prepared for the man’s arrival ; and Tix told Ella to prepare Seroza to meet her stepfather, but that she must show no signs of recognising him. Jane was asked whether she could bear to wait at table when her late mistress and Captain Ragget would be there. She was made to understand that all that was being done was for her benefit. Although she knew how bad a man Ragget was, she was still anxious that he should marry her. Lady Tixover assured her that he should be compelled to do so. She promised to wait at table, and to behave as if she were a stranger.

Soon Miss Waddams arrives, charmingly

dressed for the occasion, and is shown into Lady Tixover's room. Miss Waddams is a dissenter, and looks down from an exalted position on the vices of the world in general, and on the vanity of fine dress in particular.

And when some fine lady must have a ball-dress by a certain time, although the girls must work half through the night to do it, Miss Waddams is accustomed to console the young women by preaching to them on the vanity of dress and of going to balls; and she assures them that their only chance of going to heaven is by giving up all such vanities. And then she will quote her favourite Dr Watts—

“Why should our garments, made to hide
Our parents' shame, provoke our pride?
The art of dress did ne'er begin
Till Eve, our mother, learnt to sin:
When first she put the covering on,
Her robe of innocence was gone.”

Whereat the young people giggle, and think that Dr Watts was rather improper than otherwise.

Ought not Miss Waddams conscientiously to give up dressmaking? I once knew a man, a dissenter of course, give up his part-

nership in a bank because he did not think it right to let out money upon usury since it is forbidden in the Scriptures ; but he had made sufficient money to live even luxuriously upon before he retired. Miss Waddams might also be called a Radical, if she had any politics. She talked of equality ; but, like all Radicals, she was despotic in her own household, and toadied to her superiors when she really came face to face with them. Therefore, when she was introduced to Lady Tixover, and saw before her a charming young lady, and a possible customer, she put on her most respectful manner. Lady Tixover soon made her understand the state of affairs, and told her why she was invited to lunch. The poor old lady was a little hysterical at the infidelity of Ragget, and was inclined to look severely on Jane's conduct ; but with the help of eau-de-cologne and a glass of wine, and Lady Tixover's easy manners and sensible way of looking at the matter, she was persuaded to go in to lunch. She was first conducted by Jane to Lady Tixover's bedroom to remove all hysterical traces ; and she took this opportunity of giving an appropriate

lecture to the young woman. Tix had arranged that the gentlemen should be seated at luncheon before the ladies came in. Imagine the scene. A charming luncheon—oysters and chablis, perhaps a lobster-salad, lamb, with mint sauce, cold grouse, grapes and pineapple, all the coolnesses of early September. Captain Ragget arrives. He is introduced to Doctor Septimus and O. O., who receive him not too warmly. He sits down. Presently Ella and Seroza enter the room, and make the lovely old-fashioned genuflexion called a curtsy, and sit down opposite to him. Ragget looks up. He gives a slight start. Then he says fiercely to himself—
—“That’s Eleanor. This is a plant. Never mind; I won’t know her.” Then he looks perfectly indifferent, and makes some remark to Lady Tixover. Presently, as the waiters are carrying round the plates, Jane goes to Captain Ragget’s side with some wine. He is again startled, and is on the point of uttering a fearful oath, but suppresses it. At this point Miss Waddams is ushered into the room, and receives general attention. Captain Ragget is no longer startled. He expects

next to see the sailor who saved his life, and of whom he lives in such fear.

He almost fancies that the ghost of his late wife will presently walk in and take its place beside him. He wonders who this man can be that has such power? He is eating mechanically and drinking fiercely, and does not see that all eyes are on him. Even Miss Waddams's glare is lost upon him. Poor Jane looks distressed, but is trying to act her part well. Miss Waddams is soothed with the wine and the unaccustomed delicacies. Seroza or Eleanor shudders at the sight of her stepfather, for it reminds her of that awful day on the Island of Hawks; but Lady Tixover, who is sitting next her, occasionally whispers comfort. I think Ella could console any one under any circumstances. When I am suffering pain or am hard up, I always wish I had Ella to cheer me; and I know Lord Beechampton agrees with me in this. But what will Lord Beechampton do without Ella? For Ella must keep Tix in order now; and Tix is a man who wants a woman to keep him in order.

When the waiters retired, Jane remained.

"Jane," said the Viscount, "give Captain Ragget some wine. Have some more champagne, Ragget."

It would be a pretty thing to paint, I fancy—this fellow sitting at the table with the girl whom he had seduced offering him wine, and the step-daughter whom he had tried to murder sitting opposite him, and the woman he thought of marrying glaring at him. The old Doctor and O. O. looked on philosophically, wondering what would happen.

"I have got you here to prove you a scoundrel," said Tix, suddenly. "I can have you hanged, you know, but you are not worth the rope.

"Here is your step-daughter, whom you used most cruelly and then tried to murder. I rescued her, and mean to provide for her, as you have squandered away her mother's money. And here," pointing to Miss Wadams, "is a most respectable lady whom you have entrapped into promising to marry you. While making her house a convenient place for taking your meals, you have been base enough to seduce one of her servants. Now, will you marry her?"

The fellow seemed paralysed. He thought Seroza had long since starved to death on the Island of Hawks, and the icy stare of the Waddams was intolerable.

“Now,” said Tixover, “come to your senses. Jane is foolish enough to wish to marry you—aren’t you, Jane? Jane is infinitely too good for such a cur as you—but—will you marry her? If not, I’ll tie you up to the triangles, and give you the soundest flogging man ever endured.”

They were married that night by special licence, which Tix had before procured ; and he promised the fellow that if he would go in for work he should have help.

“What a scoundrel he looks !” said O. O.

“He is a brute of the meanest type,” said the Doctor.

“You have let him off too easily,” remarked Ella. “You ought to have flogged him, as you threatened. I am not cruel, but I could enjoy seeing such a villain’s shoulders under the cat-o’-nine-tails.”

“Yes,” said Tixover, “but I wanted him to marry that poor little wretch.”

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD MARKET.

*“Memini quae plagosum mihi parvo
Orbilium dictare.”*

BRISTOL city suited Doctor Septimus for a change—his first change for years; and he looked up some old cronies, and, among the rest, Canon Grinfield, a student and translator of Virgil that easily beat Conington. So he decided to stay a while, explore old corners, dine and talk with old friends.

Tix did not object, or Ella either: as for O. O., he was only too delighted to make discoveries in a new vicinage. He was unseen all day and a good deal of the night: he tried to solve the mysteries of Bristol. Hath Bristol mysteries? When I was a boy,

and lived in Red Cross Street, I thought so. Some of them I could to this day point out, though many a year has passed since that careless time. O. O. found out a good many things unknown to the folk whom Coleridge describes as "Bristowa's citizens."

The Doctor renewed his acquaintance with several old cronies, and tasted once more many of the delicacies which were favourite with Locke, the metaphysician. Who that has read Locke's famous treatise "On the Understanding" could imagine that he wrote thus to a friend going to Bristol:—"Taste there Milford oysters, marrow-puddings, cock-ale, metheglin, white and red muggets, elvers, sherry sack (which, with sugar, is called Bristol-milk), and some other wines, which perhaps you will not drink so good in London." It is pleasant to think that a great metaphysician could enjoy his oysters and puddings and Bristol-milk, and yet be left alone by the critics. Writers of the present day are expected to be quite silent on the subject. Your meagre critic should read "John Buncke."

Doctor Septimus Tachbrook took several

pleasant days in the companionship of his old friend Canon Grinfield, and in wandering around the ancient city whose lore he had learnt about the time that Stuckey's Bank was built. Leaning on the Canon's arm, he vicambulated. Meanwhile O. O. went out in diverse directions to explore; while Tix hired a mail-phaeton, and drove Ella all over the neighbourhood, until she was almost tired of being driven.

Ella is a queer mixture of indolence and energy. Tix is all energy, and cannot laze. It kills him to sit still. So, when he found they would have to be at the "White Lion" a few days, Tix obtained for the Viscountess from the Bristol library some classics of the "Tom Jones" and "Tristram Shandy" sort, which amused her in the intervals of their drives.

One day the Viscount had walked up Old Market Street, and was speculating what the city looked like when that noble street was its chief avenue. He loitered on, meditatively. Even when he meditated, however, he always kept his eyes open—few things escaped him, human or otherwise. He walked along the

old Bath road, and became suddenly aware of a tall boy in a blouse, who looked of gentle blood, yet had a furtive aspect, and who was walking much faster than was good for him. He was an inch taller than Tixover. He seemed about seventeen, but had evidently grown too fast.

"Stop, youngster," said Tixover, as he met him. "Who are you? You look as if you had run away from school."

The boy, who manifestly was tired out, admitted that he had.

"Afraid of a flogging, I suppose?" said Tix. "What a coward! I never was afraid of a flogging in my life. Come, you had better go back again."

"No," he said; "I want to find my wife."

"WIFE!" quoth the Viscount. "What an idea! Why, you're not above seventeen."

"I shall be twenty this year," he said; "and I am married."

"A married schoolboy! That is amusing. Sit down on the bank and tell me your story. Look here, we'll have it by way of catechism."

Few people resisted Lord Tixover—this young fellow did not, any way. He sat on

an old stump, and the Viscount catechised him.

Tix.—"What is your name?"

Catechumen.—"Hugh Thurston."

Tix.—"What school are you at?"

Hugh.—"Leaker's, at Moreton."

Tix.—"Why have you run away?"

Hugh.—"Because I want to find my wife."

Tix.—"What do you mean to do when you have found her?"

Hugh.—"I shall ask her."

Tix.—"Wise resolve! You are a fool, my boy. Are you really married?"

Hugh.—"I *am* really, sir. My wife was mamma's lady's-maid. She *is* so pretty!"

Tix.—"Older than you, of course?"

Hugh.—"Well, a little perhaps—not much."

Tix.—"You are in your twentieth year. How long had she been your mother's maid?"

Hugh.—"About ten years, I think."

Tix.—"That quite settles it. She must be eight or ten years older than you are. Come, tell me your story."

Hereupon Master Hugh Thurston made confession, as most folk found necessary

when face to face with Tix. It came to this :—General Thurston was abroad a great deal—Mrs Thurston was always out of health ; the boy was in the care of a tutor, who took much more care of himself than of his pupil ; the lady's-maid was a wicked wench who threw herself in the youngster's way. He fell in love : she kept him off. He proposed marriage : this was exactly what she wanted ; and she arranged it most artfully, assuring him that when the thing was done, if they threw themselves at General Thurston's feet, he would be sure to forgive them. The boy was as much afraid of the minx as of his father, and obeyed her orders.

The old General, who had lived on curry and chutney and other hot condiments for a good many years in India, did not quite take it in this light. He did not care about sentiment. He rang the bell for an old soldier, who was his usual attendant.

“ Frank,” he said, “ go and get a birch rod, and give this boy a good flogging.”

His order was obeyed to the letter. Then he said to the lady's-maid, now his daughter-in-law, “ Leave this house at once. The

housekeeper will give you your wages ; your boxes must be searched."

General Thurston's next arrangement was to dismiss his tutor—an evident fool—and to send his boy to a school where the discipline was severe. This he did immediately, requesting the master not to allow his son to write or receive letters. Thurston had been three years at Leaker's school without holidays, and had at last plucked up courage to run away. He had not the slightest idea where he was going ; but his great object was to escape from his schoolfellows, who chaffed him without mercy. Some parts of his story oozed out by degrees ; and he was perpetually asked how Mrs Thurston was, and when he expected her to be in an interesting condition. It is imaginable, but not easily describable, how boys at school would laugh at a fellow who, though in a position to be father of a family, was liable to be flogged for a false quantity.

The poor young fellow told Tix his story easily and fluently enough, so soon as he had once commenced. The Viscount has a double magnetism. He compels people to begin

their confessions ; he encourages them to continue. Nobody could help confessing to Tix. He would have been a most formidable member of the Society of Jesus.

He saw at once what was the matter with Hugh Thurston. He had grown too fast ; he had been left to a stupid tutor ; he had fallen into the clutches of an artful woman. General Thurston was punishing his son for what was really his own fault.

"What was the young woman's name ?" asked Tix.

"Sarah Price."

"You have heard nothing of her since ?"

"Nothing at all."

"The less you hear of her the better. Indeed, I should hope you would never hear of her again, unless to hear of her death. But you were very foolish to run away from school ; it can do you no good in the world."

As the Viscount was thus lecturing the unlucky boy, a phaeton pulled up. Poor Thurston turned pale, and ejaculated. The Rev. Mr Leaker was there, in a dirty white neck-tie, accompanied by the man who groomed his horse, dug in his garden and sometimes

assisted in maintaining discipline. Tix saw the situation instantly.

"Don't be afraid," he said, as the Rev. Mr Leaker jumped out of the trap, as eager as Squeers was to seize Smike.

Tix, with his customary activity, stood between the schoolmaster and his victim in an instant. Leaker was partly awed by his aristocratic appearance, partly frightened by his evident look of "meaning mischief." He held back, and said—

"That is a runaway schoolboy. I am his master. What right have you to interfere?"

"He is very foolish to have run away from school," said Tix. "But he has had strong provocation, if what he says is true. However, I mean to take him to my hotel to-day, and give him some dinner, and hear his story."

"Without my leave!" exclaimed Leaker, in a fury.

"With your leave, if you like to give it," said Tix. "I know a lot of the boy's relations, and I don't think he has been properly treated, though he did make a fool of himself."

"This shall not be," said Leaker, menacingly. "Jones," to the man in the phaeton, "come and take Thurston into the carriage."

The man descended in reluctant fashion, not liking Lord Tixover's look.

"Keep off, my man," said Tix, with a smile. "Upon my word, Leaker, you schoolmasters think you are going to flog all humanity. Come, give me your hand."

Leaker, taken by surprise, put out his flabby paw. Tix's fingers of fluent steel gave him such a grip that he uttered a subdued yell.

"Will that prove to you," says Tix, "that you won't get this boy away by force? You may come to the 'White Lion' to-morrow if you like, and inquire for Lord Tixover, and I will then tell you what I have decided about Thurston. He has been a great fool; but I know his family well, and they were all fools. Now, you can go."

Leaker could not make this man out. He had been bullying boys all his life with betuline despotism, and here was a man who treated him as a lackey. He was upset.

"What time to-morrow, my Lord?" he asked, submissively.

"Not before twelve. Here, Jones, here's a trifle for you."

And he tossed the surly servitor half a sovereign.

"Now, Hugh Thurston, the married man," said the Viscount, "come on with me to Bristol, and have some dinner. You and I are cousins. My mother was Mirza Thurston, your father's sister. As to you, well, I suppose you will admit you have been a fool. Or are you still too great a fool to admit it?"

"I don't know what to call myself," he said. "I have been so treated that I seem to have lost my wits."

"Ah, I see; between your governor, your wife, and your schoolmaster, you have been regularly shut up. Have you dined?"

"O yes; we dine at one."

"What did old Leaker give you?"

"This is the day we get boiled beef, with stick-jaw pudding to begin."

"Then I suppose you won't be able to eat another dinner at about seven?"

"I'll try," said Hugh Thurston.

Tix took him to the White Lion, and

told Ella all about him, and she very quickly drew him out. Irish ladies have a wonderful insight into character. She got his story from him at greater length than he had told it to Tix.

"My father," he said, "was very seldom at home, and when he was, he hardly ever spoke to me ; and mamma was always lying on the sofa, and could not bear any noise, so I kept away from her. If I had had a brother or anybody to talk to, I should not have got into such trouble. Mr Clarke, my tutor, left me to do pretty much as I liked. Sarah was the only person I could talk to."

"How long had you been in love with Sarah when she married you ?"

"I don't know. I don't like her now. I like you, Lady Tixover."

"Ah, you may like me because I am your cousin now ; but I want to know how you fell in love."

"I can hardly tell. Sarah had dressed me, and attended to me, and put me to bed when I was quite a little boy, and I always liked her, because I had nobody else to like. When I grew older she still used to look

after my wants, and I think I fell in love with her—but I don't understand how it was. She persuaded me to be married, and I was quite ready to do anything she told me. I felt very much frightened about it all, but I trusted to her to make everything right. I never expected to be whipped and sent to school. And oh, dear Lady Tixover, don't let me be sent back to school."

"I don't suppose Lord Tixover will send you back to school," she said; "but you have been a very foolish boy, and may be sorry for your folly all your life. Never mind. Be determined. You are old enough and strong enough to knock down your schoolmaster. You ought to be able to conciliate your father: you ought certainly to get some information about your wife—if she really is your wife."

"You put fresh spirit into me, Lady Tixover," said the boy. "I have been so sat upon, that I thought I should never be able to do anything."

"Pshaw! be a man. You're a Thurston. My husband's mother was a Thurston. He's afraid of nothing. Try to have the same spirit."

“I will try,” said the boy.

And when he had dined, as he had not dined for many a day—Severn salmon, Welsh mutton, rump steak and oyster sauce, grouse—Mr Hugh Thurston became quite manful. About a pint of Niblett’s old port made this married boy feel as if he were in love with the Viscountess. As they separated for the night, Tix said to him—

“Sleep sound, and don’t dream of old Leaker’s birch rod.

“If old Leaker were here I’d punch his head,” said Thurston.

CHAPTER III.

GENERAL THURSTON.

“Fierce as ten furies.”

LEAKER called next day at about one o'clock, and was shown by a waiter into a small room on the ground-floor of the hotel, used for such casual purposes. When his name was brought up to Tix, who was at luncheon, he laughed, and said to Hugh Thurston—

“We won't have him up, for fear of frightening you. Let him wait.”

Young Thurston, who was already recovering his normal courage under the Viscountess's encouragement, and with the aid of good food and sound wine, said—

“No, don't have him up, lest I should be tempted to throw him out of window.”

“ Bravo ! ” said Ella.

Presently the Viscount went down to Leaker, and offered him some effervescent refreshment. While he absorbed it, Tix said—

“ You are responsible for your pupil, I know, Mr Leaker ; but I am his first cousin, and I consider I have a right to interfere. The foolish act which he did will bring its own punishment ; it is not fair to keep him at school when he is old enough to go to college or to study for the army. I have telegraphed to General Thurston’s place in Wiltshire, and find by the reply that the General is at Leamington. I shall go there to-day, and keep the boy here till to-morrow at any rate.”

Leaker saw that it was vain to contravene the Viscount, so he grumbled a surly assent.

“ The General is a fiery old gentleman, I know,” said Tixover ; “ but I will see that you come to no harm, in money or anything else. You had better, in case of my being delayed, give the boy a holiday till the day after to-morrow, and then come at about this time.”

Leaker departed. When the Viscount went up-stairs again, he said to his wife—

“Ella, I am going to Leamington this afternoon. Only for a night. Can you get ready in an hour?”

“O dear, yes,” she said; “but what in the world can you want in Leamington?”

“I am going to see my venerable uncle, General Thurston. He is at the Clarendon Hotel, and I shall go there too.”

“Something Quixotic,” said Ella. “I thought I should cure you of Quixotism.”

“Never! On the other hand, I mean to make *you* Quixotic. I believe in the marriage of completion. If I were an author, I should make my wife write half my books. If I were a merchant, she should be a partner in the firm. Nothing in the world can cure me of the love of adventure. See! we are at Bristol a few days, and I meet an oppressed cousin and an unlucky milliner’s girl. I always sniff adventure in the air, as the war-horse sniffs powder.”

“Well, I’ll go,” says Ella, with a laugh. “I know your way, Tix. I’ll be off and pack up my tooth-brush.”

Ella had caught her husband's humour perfectly, and was quite as Quixotic as he.

"Now, Hugh Thurston," said the Viscount, "aren't you afraid to be left alone? Suppose Leaker should turn up."

"Leaker hadn't better," said the young gentleman, quite brave amid his new circumstances.

"I'll be responsible for his safety," said O. O. "I don't think your scholastic flogger would get much out of a man that has flogged a whole tribe of niggers, from the chief down wards—men, women, and children."

"Did you?"

"Did I not? Is it not written in that most veracious chronicle the *Times*? There were only a dozen of us, all told, and the niggers were thirty-seven. They had pillaged our stores, and left us on the brink of starvation. We left them with about as little skin as they left us food."

At this point Ella returned in a dress for travel, with the smallest of bags, and said—

"Now, I'm ready, Tix."

"We'll get a carriage by ourselves," said

the Viscount. "Then we shall think we are elongating our honeymoon."

Tixover had telegraphed to the excellent landlady of the "Clarendon," and found when he arrived, rather late in the evening, that comfortable rooms had been prepared for them. He inquired of the venerable-looking waiter what time General Thurston could be seen of a morning, and found that he was never visible till about one.

"His own man dresses him, my Lord," says the waiter, "and I don't a bit envy him the business. You should hear the row there is. The General, when he's got the gout, which is almost always, do swear hawful; and his man, a hold sergeant-major, swears at his master just as bad."

"Nice couple!" said Tix. "We shall just have time to-morrow morning, Ella, to drive over and see Warwick Castle and Guy's Cliff."

This they did, and at about two o'clock Tixover sent his card in to the General; who, happening to have a worse than usual attack of gout, swore at his servant for bringing it. That old soldier, the very man who three

years before had flogged poor Hugh, had got into the habit of retorting on his master with hotter oaths than his own.

When Tixover entered the room, he saw the General lying on the sofa—a huge grey-haired red-faced man. The Viscount, as we know, always went straight to the point. Uncle and nephew had not encountered each other since Tix was a mere baby; for the General had seen much active service, always distinguishing himself. Said the Viscount—

“You don’t remember me, General. I suppose I was a baby in long clothes when you last saw me.”

“O, I know all about you,” said the uncle. “You go all over the world rescuing distressed damsels, and you build yachts that look like lobsters. If you had seen as much service as I have, you wouldn’t waste time in that way.”

“I did not waste time yesterday,” said Tix. “I found your son.”

“*My* son! Hugh! Where?” roared the General.

“Running away from school,” said the Viscount.

“Running away! Has he been taken back and well flogged, the scoundrel?”

“You will make yourself ill if you get so angry,” coolly replied the Viscount. “Poor Hugh is in very comfortable quarters, with plenty to eat and drink, which he did not seem to get at Leaker’s. Now the question is, what will you do with him?”

The General was speechless with ire. It took him some time to become articulate, and then he bellowed to the sergeant-major, who all the while had been in attendance—

“Turn this fellow out, Davis.”

Davis looked at Tix, and did not obey. The General emitted a running fire of oaths.

“You have treated my cousin badly, General,” said Tixover. “He was a great fool to marry that girl; but if you had taken care of him as you ought, he would not have had the chance.”

“He has disgraced himself for life,” spluttered the General.

“Pooh! that has been said of lots of fellows who afterwards turned out first-rate men. If you can be cool for a minute or two, my dear uncle, you may do yourself a great service.

I was not in England when the boy married. He tells me the woman's name was Sarah Price."

"That was her damned name," said the General, who was surprised to find himself succumbing to Tixover's magnetism.

"Yes. Hugh tells me she had been in Mrs Thurston's service ten years."

"Not so much. She was hired in this very town, confound it! We were in a hurry to travel, and the other girl got ill, and we hadn't time to inquire about her testimonials."

"Which I daresay were forged," said Tix. "Well, she is eight or ten years older than Hugh, who I suppose was about eight or nine when she became your servant. Mrs Thurston was always ill; you were seldom at home; that idiot Clarke, his tutor, cared for nothing but eating and drinking. Can you wonder that this miserable animal entrapped him? Yet you punish the poor boy in the most humiliating way, and do your best to break his spirit for life."

"You are a bold man, sir," said Thurston, looking as if he would like to knock the Viscount down with his gouty crutch.

"I am not much afraid of anybody or anything. The Thurston blood is pretty hot; luckily for me, the Tixovers are cool. But now I have something to tell you, General, that will perhaps make you sorry for having been so hard on Hugh. That girl was married before; she is not his wife."

This time General Thurston was speechless with amazement instead of rage.

"Is that true?" he at last said.

"Quite true. The girl's maiden name was Sarah Hackforth. She married a navvie of Welsh blood called Price. He ran away in a few months, and she got into your family and played her wicked game."

"You are sure of this?"

"Quite; for I once had the pleasure of giving Price a thrashing for assaulting her. I remember all about the woman. To show that Hugh is free, both she and her husband should if possible be found. I think even that can be done."

"I am much obliged to you, Tixover," said the General. "Let Hugh come to me as soon as he likes. I hope he will forgive his father."

“He’s a good fellow,” said Tix, “though his spirit is rather cowed. When you can spare him, I should like him to stay with me a little time. I think I could wake him up.”

“I shall be only too glad. I have neither time nor temper to educate a boy. You have done me a true service, and I thank you heartily.”

The result of this interview was, that Tixover telegraphed for Hugh Thurston, who came to Leamington and saw his father. Meanwhile Tix took measures for finding Sarah Hackforth, in order to free poor Hugh from his captivity. He took Hugh back with him to Tixover Hall, having induced Doctor Tachbrook and Olifaunt to spend a short time there. In pleasant company the young fellow brightened up amazingly, and was soon scarcely recognizable as the runaway whom the Viscount had met upon the old Bath road.

One morning at Tixover Hall Doctor Septimus received a long letter from his grand-daughter. He opened it, and then laid it down in despair, exclaiming—

“Why *will* ladies cross?”—after which he

vented his energy on a game-pie. When he was subsequently sipping his Mocha, he said,

“Dear Lady Tixover, do read this letter for me.”

Ella took it, and began to read.

“O, I only want an abstract. Don’t give Miranda’s prolixities.”

“Well,” said Ella, “she says we are all to come to Rothescamp immediately, because Beechampton and Captain Grainger are coming. And she says that she wants Tix particularly, because there is a mysterious servant-girl on the premises, and she knows he is fond of mysterious servant-girls.”

“Faith!” said the Viscount, “I think there’s enough on my hands, with this schoolboy here to take care of.”

“O, you’ll go,” said O. O. “The schoolboy is discovering his manhood. We had several midnights in Bristol, and Hugh knocked a fellow down one night.”

“He’s improving under your tuition,” said the Viscount. “Then I can attend to Lady Tachbrook’s mysterious servant-girl.”

“O yes; and we must meet Beechampton, dear old boy!” said Ella.

“ And Grainger,” said Tixover, “ from all I have heard of him he is a man worth knowing.”

“ I met him in Calcutta once,” said O. O., “ and was much amused by the judgment passed on him by one of his own sailors : ‘ He’s got a damned queer old figure-head of his own, but I’d rather sail under him than Admiral Nelson, K.C.B.’ ”

A few days later the whole party started for Rothescamp.

CHAPTER IV.

MYFANWY.

"No waiter, but a Knight-Templar."

THE Earl of Beechampton and Captain Grainger had not arrived when the party returned to Rothescamp. The Doctor went home, taking with him O. O. ; the Viscount and Viscountess went to Rothescamp-on-the-Hill, taking with them Seroza and Hugh Thurston. Poor Thurston began to have his wits about him, and Seroza began to think him very nice.

But Seroza had previously seen some one whom she preferred to this boy ; only this some one scarcely condescended to look at her. She was disgusted thereat. It drove her to flirt with Hugh, of whose story she

knew nothing, the Viscount being as good a hand at retaining secrets as at finding them out. Doubtless the flirtation did the boy good, as all flirtations will when carried not too far. The two young people, left pretty much alone, wandered in the quaint gardens of Rothescamp-on-the-Hill, exchanging experiences, which were singularly unlike. Seroza aroused Hugh Thurston's boyish indignation by recounting some of her adventures with her rascally stepfather ; but Hugh, though he confessed to running away from school, did not confess that he had been sent there for getting married.

The spectators of this flirtation were much amused, all save Harold Tachbrook, who, though he treated Seroza like a little girl, did so in a measure because he was afraid of taking too great an interest in her. He had made up his mind that he was too old to marry, though in the very prime of his life, with a constitution strengthened by vigorous exercise and abundant travel. Miranda, the sly rogue, saw what was in the wind—women always do. She chatted about it with her husband.

“By Jove!” said Tom, “how lucky you married before getting a stepmother!”

“It would be amusing to call that little chit, mamma,” said Miranda.

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“What a marvellous capacity you have for finding adventure!” quoth Miranda to Tix one day. “You seem to get it by personal attraction, as Franklin got electricity from the clouds with a kite. Now there is a mysterious servant-girl that our housekeeper has lately hired—mysterious, I mean, in this way, that she moves about the room like a lady, and that she does her work willingly enough, but as if she would like to do something better. I want to see if you are clear-sighted enough to detect her when she is in the room.”

“I will bet you a dozen of kid-gloves against a kiss—if Tom and Ella don’t object—that I shall know her the minute I see her, and that I find out all about her in an hour.”

“I am sorry you are afraid of Ella,” said Miranda. “I am not a bit afraid of Tom, and shall kiss anybody I like.”

"So the bet's on," replied Tix. "I shall win."

"I shall arrange for some of the maids to wait at luncheon to-morrow," said Miranda ; "but I am afraid you will discover which is the one only too easily, for she is sure to be a little bashful at having to wait for the first time ; for she has never been in service before, and was hired to do needlework and help the maids with the bed-chamber work."

"Never mind," said Tix ; "the bet's on, and I mean to win my kiss."

Which he did. The girl came into the room to wait at luncheon, and the Viscount spotted her at once. When the servants were out of the room, Tix said—

"That's the girl—the one that moves like a wave. She's Celtic—Welsh probably."

"You're a clever guesser, and deserve your kiss," said Miranda. "My gloves are lost, that's quite clear. She came here, I understand, from an orphan asylum, but old Mrs Ladley, my housekeeper, thinks she has good blood in her. She won't say a word to anybody."

"I'll manage the second part of my engage-

ment as well as the first. Tell the house-keeper to send her down to Rothescamp village on some errand. I'll meet her in Long River."

"What do you say to that, Ella?" asked Miranda.

"O, he's incorrigible. He may do what he likes; but then I shall do what I like."

"Yes, child, you shall," said the Viscount. "Now I'm off down Long River, and you, Lady Tachbrook, must manage to get the girl sent to the village."

"It shall be done," replied Miranda; "but I declare that if you call me Lady Tachbrook, I'll call you the Honourable Viscount Tixover. I look upon that sort of language as equivalent to a cut direct."

Tixover, having promised to mend his manners, went down Long River to a point where the green Ruscomb valley in the downs crossed the glaring white chalk road. He sat down amid fragrant heather and thyme and marjoram, and smoked a weed more fragrant than either. Presently appeared the girl, striding down the hill almost too rapidly—the walk of the mountaineer.

Tix intercepted her.

"What is your name, young woman?" he asked. "I think I have seen you at Sir Harold's."

"Yes, sir—my Lord, I mean. I have seen you. They call me Mary Coombe."

"You came, I am told, from an orphan asylum. Why were you sent into service? You seem fit for better work."

"If my dear father, Caradoc Cwm, had lived," she answered, "I should never have been so degraded. He was a great bard, and made famous triads, and was descended in a straight line from Llanwnws Cwm, who was chief poet of Wales two thousand years ago."

The girl, then, mixing fluency with timidity, told Tix a long story in a somewhat incoherent style. It will be better here to explain matters.

When Angelina Pinnock (*vide* "Marquis and Merchant"), the clever mistress of the orphan asylum at which Lady Waynflete was educated, became Mrs Mowbray, she did not neglect the institution for whose fame and prosperity she had done so much. A new edifice of sumptuous character was opened in

a pleasant suburb, and a Prince and Princess came to lay the foundation-stone ; and Mrs Mowbray gave money to build a chapel in the latest form of Gothic architecture. The mistress who succeeded the adored Angelina was one of her old pupils, Emma Harrison, a plodding young lady, with not too many ideas. Now, Miss Pinnock, when chief preceptress, had a peculiar method of dealing with her pupils. She had her favourites. They were not chosen for cleverness so much as for submissiveness. She objected to a girl's having any opinion of her own. She liked to despotise. The cleverest girls got worst treated. The Pinnock abhorred independence. Emma Harrison had always been servile, so she did all in her power to secure her the succession.

The daughter of Caradoc Cwm had reached the orphan asylum about three years before Angelina Pinnock's transfiguration and beatification. When her name was entered as Myfanwy Cwm, the Pinnock sneered thereat. She had a historic contempt for Celts, and a complete ignorance of the Welsh language. She ordained that the girl should

be called Mary Coombe, as the pronunciation of the Welsh word Cwm is much like our English Coombe.

“ Myfanwy Cwm ! ” she exclaimed, indignantly. “ Why, nobody can be expected to pronounce such a name.”

So poor Myfanwy became Mary ; and it is probable that the Pinnock did not know the two names to be of almost equal significance. The retired schoolmistress, now Mrs Mowbray, was wont to visit the school pretty often ; she considered it under her patronage still. She guided or misguided Miss Harrison. It was a pleasant occupation for her while Mowbray was occupied with parliamentary duties. And now Myfanwy can go on with her story.

“ My father and mother died when I was a little girl, and then I went to live in Yorkshire with a lady who had known my mother. Her name is Miss Hemming. She lives in a big house, and I did not often see her ; but I was taken care of by a kind servant. And then I heard that I was going to school in London. I had never been to school before, and I wondered what it was like. The servant travelled with me ; and

when I arrived I was so much surprised to see such a large house, very much bigger than Miss Hemming's. I felt quite frightened when I went into it, and saw so many girls. They were all dressed alike in ugly clothes; and I thought they all looked exactly alike, and I wondered how ever I should be able to tell one from another. And then they took me away from Caroline, my servant, and took me into a room with eleven other little girls, who had also just arrived. They cut our hair very short, and then undressed us, and put clothes on to us which were like those which I had seen on all the girls when I arrived. The clothes didn't fit at all, and were coarse and rough and uncomfortable. Then our own clothes were pinned up in a bundle, and we were sent back to say good-bye to our friends. Caroline had my bundle of clothes given to her. When she saw me with my hair cut and such ugly clothes on, she began to cry, and said, 'To think how I have curled the little dear's hair every day, and now they've cut off all her curls! O! do give me a curl,' she said to the woman who brought us in. But the woman answered

her roughly that she must make haste and say goodbye, as she must go. I begged Caroline to take me back to Miss Hemming, but she said she must not, but would ask Miss Hemming to send for me. I looked out for Caroline for many days, for I hoped that she would not leave me in such a dreadful place. But she never came. I hope I shall never be so unhappy again as I was during the first few weeks I was at school. I got used to it at last, and I began to love some of the girls. There were some a good deal older than I, and they used to be kind to me."

"Did you never have any holidays?" asked Tix.

"Yes, there were holidays given for a fortnight in the summer, and some of the girls went away. They used to read a list of those who were going; and I always listened anxiously for my name, but it never came, so I had to remain there always. Some of the girls remembered the time when no holidays were ever given."

"Did Miss Hemming never come to see you?" said Tix.

“ Yes ; she came twice while I was there ; and she told me that I should remain a certain number of years, and that I must learn all I could, as I should have to get my living when I left.”

“ Do all the girls have to work when they leave the school ? ”

“ Most of them do. Most of them become governesses. If their friends come forward and say that they can find means for finishing a girl’s education when she leaves, they teach them accomplishments. But I had nobody to come forward for me, so I was not taught any accomplishments. I was considered clever at needlework, and so I was sent here.”

“ Did you ever know a girl at school named Amy Grey ? ”

“ O yes ; I loved her so much. She was a big girl when I went to the school, and she asked me about my father and mother, and was so kind to me. I was so sorry when she went away. I wish I could see her again.”

It took the Viscount some time to extract her story from the girl, and when he had suc-

ceeded he was savage. Caradoc Cwm, who professed descent not only from Llanwnws Cwm, but also from that famous Caradoc whom the Romans styled Caractacus, was not only a bard, but also a gentleman. He had a nice little property in Anglesea, or the Island of the English ; but, unluckily, like many other bards, he spent rather more than his income, and had to mortgage his estate, and died intensely insolvent. There was no demand for triads ; and triads, unluckily, were his chief point. He had, probably, inherited the tendency from Llanwnws Cwm.

When a girl left the school, it was much within the mistress's power what position in life she should assume, if there were no relations to receive her. Some became governesses, and others servant-maids ; and it was one great fault of the Pinnock administration, that the fools were often turned into the former, and the clever girls into the latter. A tradesman's daughter, if servile to Miss Pinnock or Miss Harrison, might get a good situation. A gentleman's orphan, full of spirit, and averse from servility, would be sent out as a housemaid. Thus it is that we

find Myfanwy Cwm transformed into Mary Coombe and kettle-scrubbing at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill.

Tixover, having got all her story from Myfanwy, let her run down-hill upon her errand. He walked back and told Miranda, who sympathised with his indignation when he said—

“Fancy making that girl a servant! The woman ought to be hanged.”

“We’ll put things right,” said Lady Tachbrook.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

“ Youth is too hot to look for truth ;
 Age is too languid to be sage ;
 Yet, on mine oath,
 I have known some men wise in youth,
 I have known some men wise in age—
 A few in both.”

HAROLD TACHBROOK passed the greater part of his time with his father, after his cousin had got the estate well into hand, and saw his way to managing it. Doctor Septimus and his son got on excellent well together, and lived their quiet life pleasantly enough. O. O. was with them arranging his journals, and much amused by the newspaper speculations as to the precise latitude and longitude in which he was supposed to be now exploring.

One day there would be a letter in the

Times proving irrefragably that O. O. was dead, having been eaten by cannibals; even their favourite sauce was mentioned, and the method they adopted of dressing his tougher parts. This would be disproved the next by a positive gentleman maintaining that O. O. was at that moment on the summit of Chimborazo. Immediately an acute critic reminded the last writer that Chimborazo was a volcano, and that if O. O. had reached the summit he would almost certainly fall into the crater. Thus the controversy went on. As Olifaunt read it morning by morning in the Doctor's breakfast-room, he was intensely amused, as indeed were the Doctor and Harold.

One day, however, there appeared a report of a meeting of the Geographicals, whereat it was decided to organise an expedition in search of the illustrious traveller Oliver Olifaunt. Thereupon O. O. wrote this note, which he got Harold to send to London to be posted:—

“DEAR MR PRESIDENT,—I have been for some time in England posting up my journal.

I should prefer your not sending an expedition in search of me, all things considered. Indeed, I think it always a mistake. No man has a right to be a geographical explorer who cannot find his way back as well as out.

—Yours,

“ OLIVER OLIFAUNT.”

Having thus liberated his mind, O. O. went off to his corner in the Doctor's bookroom, and wrote with impetuous pertinacity.

Doctor Septimus Tachbrook had a wonderful faculty of insight. This instinct, which enables a man to influence his fellows by knowledge of their character, is at the root of all governing power, whether ecclesiastical or political or scientific. It makes popes and kings and captains. Know character, and you know everything. You can thereby gather up the knowledge of other men. There are those who can read character as they would read the title of a book. Such are the masters of men.

The Doctor saw what was the matter with his son earlier, perhaps, than his son himself saw it. And one day, when they were

strolling in the sunshine under an ancient yew-hedge, the old gentleman said—

“Harold, hadn’t you better marry again?”

“My dear father, what an idea!”

“A very good one, I think. Regard it seriously. If you don’t get some other interest in life, you will soon be very tired of walking up and down these old gravel-walks with me. I am going to live a century, if only to astonish the erudite and incredulous editor of *Notes and Queries*. Now, as I get older, I shall want more attention; and, although you’re a good fellow enough, Harold, a woman about the place is what one wants. So I think, for my sake, you ought to marry. I also think it for your own. You will get restless else, and want to be off on your travels again. I want you at home. Consider, I have seen so little of you.”

“As you are urging me to marry, I suppose you have some one in view,” said Harold.

“Haven’t *you* some one in view?” retorted the Doctor.

Harold laughed.

“I believe you have found me out,” he said.

"I found you out long ago. You like Seroza. I think she would suit you perfectly. She is younger than you, but she is not a baby. I like the girl. I don't see that you can do better than to marry her, and settle down with her here. I won't interfere with you."

"But how about the girl's liking for me?" says Harold.

"O, dear! You young fellows profess to be so devilish bashful. She is in love with you, every inch; if she were not, you might make her so in ten minutes. Come, what do you say?"

"I like the child, as you seem to have seen, but I thought her too young. Besides, lately she appears to have taken a fancy to young Thurston."

"Well, you are a wiseacre!" says the Doctor. "Why, that's all to make you come forward. She is not the girl to care for a mere boy like that."

"You think not?" said Harold, reflectively. "I don't know. These youngsters seem to get the best chances. I know more about sheep than I do about girls; but it certainly

seems to me they are fonder of boys than of men."

"The reason thereof is obvious," said Doctor Septimus, taking a long pull at his meerschaum, that it might not be extinguished while he lectured. "Girls prefer boys to men : why ? Because they like to command. Because, growing mentally faster than boys, they anticipate an obedient husband. That is mere surface business. If a sensible girl meets a man of the true sort, she soon finds out her mistake. She finds that it is better for her to obey than to command. In my long experience, I have, as you may suppose, seen both kinds of marriages a good many times ; and if I were in Parliament, I would certainly bring in a bill to make all marriages invalid where the man is under thirty."

"Why not go into Parliament ?" said Harold. "A few ideas would be useful there : if not accepted at once, they would be pregnant with future issues. I'll make Tom make that dolt Fosset accept the Chiltern Hundreds, and you shall take the seat. By Jove ! the idea is delightful ! I wonder it never occurred to me before."

"It is rather old to begin," said the Doctor.

"My dear father, that's the beauty of it. I should like to see you in Parliament. Come, if you'll go into the House, I'll marry Seroza."

"If you don't," said Doctor Tachbrook, "I'll marry her myself, and give Miranda a step-grandmother."

Within half-an-hour, Harold was at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill. The notion of getting his father into Parliament had excited his imagination. The excitement infected Tom Jones and Tix the moment the project was named.

"I'll write to Fosset at once," said Sir Harold. "He always does what he is told."

"Keep it close," said Harold the elder.

"O, I always tell Miranda everything."

"Very proper," said Miranda's father. "Tix, you must take your place in the Upper House when my governor appears in the Lower."

Therewith, leaving his friends to talk over the scheme, he walked out into the gardens, and, as he expected, very soon met Hugh Thurston and Seroza strolling about together. Both blushed a little when they saw him.

"I wonder whether they are in love?" he thought. "Mere babyism, I suspect."

He joined them. Thurston looked grim. Seroza looked rather pleased. After a little idle talk, he said—

"Thurston, I want to say something of a private nature to Seroza. Will you leave us for a few minutes?"

Very glum looked the boy, but he walked away.

"What *can* you have to say to me, Mr Tachbrook?" said Seroza. "Nothing very dreadful, I hope."

"Something rather dreadful, Miss Wallis."

"I am not Miss Wallis."

"Well, Miss Eleanor, then."

"And I am not Miss Eleanor. I will only be called by the name that dear Lord Tixover gave me."

"It was just like Tix, calling you Seroza—Azores spelt backwards. I wish I had been with Tix when he found you."

"But what is it of a dreadful nature that you have to say to me? I am impatient."

"Do you mean that you are impatient to

get back to Mr Thurston? Is his conversation so very interesting?"

"No, I do not. And I *do* find Mr Thurston's conversation interesting. He has been telling me his history, and I have told him mine; and we have been wondering which of us has been most unfortunate. Fancy what an escape the poor boy had from being nearly married to that woman!"

"Ah! it is fortunate he had, or he would not have been at liberty to marry now. I suppose he will be wanting to marry soon."

"I should think it would be wiser for him to wait another ten years. But when are you going to make your dreadful communication to me, Mr Tachbrook?"

He led her to an alcove of his own contrivance, where, sheltered by Portugal laurels, you could sit and look down upon Rothescamp valley, with the Rothe winding through it.

"Sit down, child," he said.

Seroza obeyed, looking a little frightened.

"You seem very much in love with young Thurston," he said.

"I'm not a bit—not a single bit! But how dare you ask me?"

“ Why, what a little tigress you are !” said Harold. “ I asked you because I wanted to know. Boys and girls like you and Thurston must be looked after a little.”

She looked at him with a tear in each bright eye. “ You are cruel !” she said.

Harold kissed her. No word was spoken ; yet each knew the other's thought.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SEARCH FOR MARY FANE.

“Time is like the sea :
Aught lost therein sinks deeper every minute,
Till it is irretrievable : but time,
Unlike the sea, is of an infinite depth,
Foiling the strongest divers.”

A STRANGE fancy haunted Harold Tachbrook. It was that Seroza was perhaps the daughter of that flighty Mary Fane, his wife's old friend. She had never mentioned her mother's maiden name : but Harold was a wonderful fellow for presentiments and intuitions, and he could not help thinking there was something in it. So, talking to his sweetheart one day under the plane-tree, he said, “Seroza, my darling, what was your mamma's name ?”

“Papa always called her Mary,” she said.

"But her other name, darling?"

"It is very strange," she said, "but I don't think I ever knew—or if I did, I have forgotten."

"Curious," said Harold; "look, I am going on a journey to-morrow, would you like to come with me?"

"Would I not?"

"Not afraid, my pet?"

"Who *could* be afraid, with *you*?"

Harold had decided to go straight to the quaint old school where Edith Ockit and Mary Fane had been girls together, and to see what information might there be obtainable. So the next day he started with Seroza to the place in question, an old-fangled ripe-red house, with a walled garden, in a southern suburb of London. It was a school still. LADIES' SEMINARY was emblazoned in blue and gold above the gate-way.

"Dear me," says Seroza; "are you going to take me to school?"

"I daresay you would be all the better for it, but I can't spare you," replied Harold.

It was quite obvious, when they had found their way in and been introduced to Miss

Primer, the mistress of the establishment, that she imagined she was dealing with an elderly gentleman who desired her to finish his daughter's education. Miss Primer was perhaps fifty; she was dry and stiff and condescending; she had appalled two or three generations of girls. She was much disappointed when she found Harold Tachbrook's errand, still she was rather mollified by his perfect courtesy.

"Will you pardon me for asking you, Miss Primer, whether you have been here long enough to remember two girls who were great friends, Edith Ockit and Mary Fane?"

Miss Primer started. She remembered well. At that time her mother had been the head of the school, and she herself had the hard work to do, and Mary Fane had so plagued her with her wild ways that she treated her as cruelly as she had power to do.

"I remember them both," she answered.

"Could you kindly tell me anything about them after they left your establishment?"

"Very little," she said. "It is a long long time ago, you know. Edith was a good dear girl, and gave no trouble. Mary was a wicked

little creature, always in mischief. Edith went to live with an uncle. Mary, I heard, married a Colonel Wallis, and went abroad."

"O then it *was* my mamma!" exclaimed Seroza.

"Most clearly," said Harold Tachbrook. "Miss Primer, I am much obliged to you for your information, and for your allowing me to ask such questions. I should like to make you some return, if I might. I trust your school flourishes?"

"We get on pretty well," said the ancient maiden, "but school-keeping is difficult work. I grow tired of it."

"I do not wonder," said Harold. "Still, we might wake you up a little. Shall I offer a few prizes—say a hundred a year—to induce the girls to grow livelier? A hundred a year is nothing to me, and I should like to encourage the institution in which Edith Ockit and Mary Fane were educated?"

"You are too liberal, Mr Tachbrook," said Miss Primer.

"Not at all," he said. "It is a sentimental fancy of mine. And another fancy of mine is, that when you have a few days to spare in

holiday-time you should come and see us. It will do you a world of good. Teaching children is tiresome business. Will you come?"

"I fear I shall be in the way," she said, "but it will give me great pleasure."

"Then I depend on you," he replied. "And now please give me pen, ink, and paper."

He wrote a cheque for a hundred pounds.

"This is for the first year," he said. "I will arrange with my solicitor to have the succeeding years paid to you."

Poor Miss Primer could hardly articulate her thanks.

"What an odd thing to do, Harold!" said Seroza, as they drove away.

"My darling, that poor pinched old creature educated my wife and your mother. She has worked hard all her life, and I dare say is at this moment in mortal fear of her butcher and her baker. A hundred pounds more a year will make her few years happier."

"But it was to be for prizes, wasn't it?" asked Seroza.

“Do you think I shall inquire what is done with it? I hope she’ll give as little as she can in prizes, and supply herself with more mutton and wine. The dreariest thing in life is a struggling schoolmistress.”

“You are very kind, Harold,” said Seroza.

“Am I? Well, in this case I am only kind to a poor old creature who educated your mother and my wife. You see it is quite clear, my love. At the very last moment Edith told me, twenty years ago, to seek Mary Fane. I have sought Mary Fane—I have found her daughter. Can her darling daughter love an old fellow like me?”

“I shall pull your whiskers, Harold, if you ask impertinent questions,” says Seroza. “I think I love you quite as much as you deserve.”

CHAPTER VII.

TIXOVER'S NEW CRUSADE.

"Churls love to trample down the better blood."

TIXOVER having reported his conversation with Myfanwy to Miranda, her little Ladyship became quite indignant, and used vigorous language about orphan asylums. Tix, meanwhile, who was always prompt, and who knew everybody, wrote a note at once to Lord Waynflete, asking him if Lady Waynflete would object to say whether she knew anything about the girl. He was well aware that Adrian had no prejudices, and did not care in the least about people knowing that his lovely wife had been at a charitable establishment. Waynflete and Tixover had been at college together. They were singularly different ;

but they had what mathematicians call a "common measure;" this common measure was in their case a hatred of humbug. As to their differences, they were a myriad at least. Adrian liked the country quietude, his own ancestral house, his old patrician oaks, and even the plebeian underwood, his trout-stream, his old friends, his young wife. His young wife Tix also loved, of course; but he liked adventure of all sort—the more romantic the better. But they both detested hypocrisy and rascality; and so were sympathetic.

Tixover got a reply by return of post from Lady Waynflete herself. Thus it ran:—

"DEAR LORD TIXOVER,—Adrian had gone to town when your letter arrived. I always open his letters when they are not in blue envelopes; and I am glad I opened this one, because it enables me to give you an immediate answer. Poor little Myfanwy was a great pet of mine when at the school. She was quite young, but there was a delicacy in her demeanour which showed she was of gentle blood. I think the way she has been

treated is a great shame. She was quite ladylike ; her father of an old Welsh family ; her mother English, and well born. To make a servant of her was simply wicked.

"Why don't you bring your wife to see us ? You don't know me, and Adrian has, I think, told me that you don't know Lady Wraysbury. There is nobody at Ashridge now. You would have the pleasure of seeing Mowbray Mansion across the valley. Do come, if only for a day or two. I should like to see poor Myfanwy.

"AMY WAYNFLETE."

"What a lovely letter Lady Waynflete writes !" said Ella, as she read it. "She must be charming."

"You'll say so when you see her," said Tix. "I am going over to-day."

This was at breakfast.

"What a hurry you are always in !" said Tom Jones. "Won't to-morrow do ?"

"O, you know him by this time," interposed Miranda. "He can't be held. Let him go."

"Thank you, Lady Tachbrook," said Tix. "Add another favour : let Ella take your

Welsh maid-servant as a personal attendant."

This was arranged, and before dinner that evening the Viscount and Viscountess, with Myfanwy as maid, arrived at Ashridge. The Marquis knew Tix before; the Marchioness only by name and report: but he was popular at once, and so—even more so—was Ella. Her fresh Irish wit delighted every one. I think it delighted more than any one Métivier, who had come to dinner that day, and who extracted from Ella a perfect bouquet of unsuspected legendary flowers. Métivier awoke them in her memory. He had the faculty, just as the botanist knows how to find rare flowers hidden in the labyrinthine entanglement of bosky hedges. Sometimes her traditions came in a lyric shape: here is one. I am sorry I cannot sketch Ella as she sang, or jot down the pleasant Celtic air:—

"It was Patrick Magee, who was out on the spree;
A poet was he, and an excellent fellow.
With the Duke he had dined on a meal to his mind,
For the Duke is inclined to make poets grow mellow.

"He whistled a tune in the light of the moon;
It was 'Eileen Aroon,' or some other vagary.
But he stopped and he shook, for by brink of the brook
There startled his look a remarkable fairy.

"A fairy ! a score, and how many more ?

Away Patrick tore, till he suddenly tumbled ;
For the night it grew late, and his legs weren't quite
straight,
And the wine in his pate his audacity humbled.

"He slept off his fume amid many a mushroom—

Those fairies by whom his weak mind had been flurried ;
Then he cried '*Crom a boo !* I must tell unto you
'This story so true.' To his Grace's he hurried."

"And got breakfast," said Tix. "A clever fellow was Pat Magee. The chief of the Fitzgeralds must have been proud of him. By the way, I suppose Ireland's only Duke is a relation of yours, Ella ?"

"Distant, if at all," said she. "I am a Geraldine : he is only a Fitzgerald."

"O, the pride of the child ! Disdaining relationship with the famous Duke of Leinster ! You are like Northcote the painter, who, when told the Prince Regent said he knew him, replied, 'Pooh ! it's only his brag.'"

"Old families are not always the most lasting," said Métivier. "The finest stocks are the delicatest."

Next day, Lord Tixover having ascertained from his friends that not only the wealthy Mr Mowbray, but also the queenly Mrs Mowbray,

were at home, walked across the village and up to Mowbray mansion. He sent in his card, and was at once admitted. Mowbray was looking through journals and correspondence ; his wife was reading, with a slightly critical care, the last sensational book by the last dabbler in shallow science. Both were very civil. After a little of that preliminary conversation which seems inevitable among Englishmen, even if you were going to "draw Priam's curtain at the dead of night," Tix said—

"I hope you will forgive me, Mrs Mowbray ; but my principal object in calling here was in connection with an orphan institute, to which I know you are a great benefactress. Lady Waynflete was one of your pupils, I know ; and has told me how greatly you improved the education and treatment of the girls."

"I hope I did," said Mrs Mowbray, not quite certain what would come next.

"It is certain that you did," said Tix ; "and it is greatly to your honour that you raised the school to so efficient a state ; and in continuing to give it assistance you show

a noble generosity. I am not in favour of private charities at all myself. I would have all fatherless children, devoid of resources, brought up by the Government. But I should like, with your permission, to point out an anomaly in the working of the system, which possibly your great influence could to some extent rectify."

"I am sure I shall be gratified to do anything within my humble power for such a purpose," she said. "What is this anomalous condition of affairs, my Lord?"

"I can best give it you by a single instance. I am staying at the Marquis of Wraysbury's. His daughter-in-law is your old pupil. Lady Tixover brings with her a lady's-maid : she also is your old pupil. Both are of good blood and of charming manner ; but one rises to the peerage, and the other sinks to the servants' hall. Is this fair?"

Mrs Mowbray liked not this plain speaking of the Viscount's, being aware of having many times made favourites of girls undeserving of favour, simply because they were obeisant and submissive. She said, perhaps rather spitefully—

"It was a mere chance Miss Gray became a peeress. As to the other, who is she?"

"Her name," replied Tix, "is Myfanwy Cwm. On both sides I have ascertained her family to be good. Her mother was English, and well-born. Lady Waynflete said to me, when we were talking about it, 'I believe she is of better descent than I am.'"

"But what can I do in the matter, Lord Tixover? She was at the school after I left it."

"Quite true; but the young person who succeeded you is imbued with your ideas. Why does Lady Waynflete go out as Mr Mowbray's governess, while this poor Myfanwy is sent out as a servant, both being the daughters of gentlemen? I think such degradation of girls who are born ladies, and whose sole crime is orphanhood, is a prostitution of charity. I shall bring it before the House of Lords this session."

"There are reasons for making this difference," said Mrs Mowbray.

"I understand the reasons," said Tix. "If a girl has friends she is well treated; if not, not. This is the vice of voluntary charity."

My object in coming here, Mrs Mowbray, is to ask you to prevent this sort of thing from going on. I am not thinking of poor little Myfanwy Cwm, though nothing can make amends to her for having been forced into servitude with all the feelings of a lady. Myfanwy has protectors in Lady Waynflete and my wife ; and the poor child shall have a happier time hereafter. But with your influence, Mrs Mowbray, derived partly from your success as mistress, and partly from your liberality now, you surely can prevent such anomalies from occurring again. Why should the daughter of a gentleman and the daughter of a cabman be educated side by side ? ”

“ You talk strongly, Lord Tixover,” said Mowbray, who all this while had been silently listening.

“ I talk strongly,” said Tix, “ because I think strongly, and mean to act strongly. The voluntary charities of England are among our greatest disgraces.”

Wherewith he wished them good morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF STOCKING-MAKERS.

“ When good King Edward raised a garter
Dropt in the dance, some idiot winks ;
Whereon at once he caught a Tartar :
‘ Ashamed be he who evil thinks.’

“ The manufacturers of stocking
(If stockings have a singular)
Will not, I hope, conceive it shocking,
When I describe what fools they are ! ”

THE Worshipful Company of Stocking-makers were incorporated by Queen Elizabeth. Her Grace having to send to Spain for silk-stockings, some of our London citizens determined to make those articles in England. They presented several pairs to the Queen, and she in return incorporated the Company. But what have stocking-makers to do with our story, or the worshipful gentlemen who are called stocking-makers ?—for I doubt if

there is a stocking-maker amongst them in the present day.

When Tix had seen Mrs Mowbray, he consulted with Ella and Lady Waynflete as to what had better be done next for Myfanwy. Lady Waynflete advised writing to Miss Hemming to find out whether she had any interest in the child, or knew any of her relations. Tix and Ella arranged to remain at Ashridge until they received an answer, as Lady Waynflete was much interested in Myfanwy.

The answer came as follows :—

“MY LORD,—The only interest I have in Myfanwy Cwm is that she is the daughter of an old friend of mine. Her mother’s family and mine were neighbours, and her mother, Florence Marsden, being my own age, was my constant playmate and afterwards friend, until her marriage with the Welshman, to which we were all so much opposed, that she never would come into the neighbourhood again ; so I never saw her after her marriage. I heard of her death and afterwards of her husband’s, and I then asked one of her rela-

tions what would be done with the child that was left. She said she did not know, and she did not care, as Florence had chosen to marry a Welshman, and she would not have a Welsh brat in her house. I then proposed putting her in an orphan school, and she said if I chose to trouble about other people's children I must take the responsibility. I am not fond of children, but I thought that, for the sake of my old friend Florence, I would see the child put in a fair way to make her living. So I sent for her to live with me until I could obtain sufficient votes to place her in the orphan school. She remained in the school several years, and I visited her there twice when I had occasion to go to London. The second time that I visited her was within six months of the time when she would be of age to leave the school. I inquired what would be done with her. The mistress told me that she had not distinguished herself at all, but that she could work neatly, and would make a nurse to young children, or a lady's-maid.

"I pointed out that she was the daughter of a gentleman, and that it was a pity she could

not take a better position in life. The mistress said she really could not take that into consideration, as the girl had no talents. I then went to the City to an old friend of my father's, and a member of the committee of the school, and also a member of the Company of Stocking-makers. I told him Myfanwy's history, and asked if he could suggest anything better than service for her. He told me that the Stocking-makers' Company had, among their charitable bequests, a sum of money to be distributed every year to orphan youths and maidens for apprenticeship; £50 to each child for five years' apprenticeship; and that with these gifts girls were often apprenticed to schools. He promised to obtain one for Myfanwy, and asked me to find a good school to put her to. I found a suitable school, and made all arrangements with the mistress. It seems to be the custom, when a child obtains one of these gifts, for the clerk of the Stocking-makers' Company to inquire from the parents or guardians, or schoolmistress, of the child, whether the child has always borne a good character. Mr Carpenter, the clerk of the

Company, wrote to Miss Harrison, the mistress of the orphan school, inquiring whether Myfanwy Cwm bore a good character, and was deserving of the gift of the Worshipful Company of Stocking-makers. Miss Harrison returned answer that Myfanwy Cwm was rather a dull child, and that there was another girl of age to leave the school on whom the gift would be better bestowed. The gift was accordingly bestowed on the other child, and I was so much annoyed that I took no further interest in the affair.

“Miss Harrison afterwards wrote and told me that she had found a suitable place for Myfanwy in the family of Sir Harold Tachbrook.

“You ask me what relations she has. The only one in this neighbourhood is the one I have mentioned before, an aunt of her mother’s, who does not care to hear anything about her. By inquiring of this aunt it might be ascertained what other relations she has, but I feel certain that they take no interest in her, as the whole family were much against the mother’s marriage.

“I have given your Lordship as clear a

statement as I can of the circumstances which led to Myfanwy's present position, and if it is of any use to you, I am happy in obliging your Lordship.

“ ELIZABETH HEMMING.

“ *P.S.*—I may as well say that there is one person who is interested in Myfanwy, and that is an old servant of mine named Caroline. She is now married, and is Mrs Webb ; and when I happen to pass by her house and see her, she always asks if I have heard anything of ‘ Miss Fanny,’ as she used to call her.—E. H.”

When Tix had finished reading this letter aloud, Lady Waynflete exclaimed—

“ Poor child ! she hasn’t a friend in the world. I shall take care of her.”

“ O,” said Tix, “ but I discovered her, Lady Waynflete, so I have a right to her.”

“ But you have several distressed damsels on your hands already. I may as well relieve you of one.”

“ Well, we will hold a consultation to-morrow, and decide what is to be done. But the first thing I mean to do is to run up to

town, and see this Mr Carpenter, the clerk to the Stocking-makers. Would you like to come with me, Ella? You will have to go into the City; for the wonderful old Stocking-makers are sure to have a place called Stocking-makers' Hall, and it is sure to be up one of those mysterious-looking narrow turnings in the City."

"O," said Ella, "I shall like it immensely. And shall I be able to buy silk stockings? Shall I bring you some, Lady Waynflete?"

Tix and Ella went off at once, and when they reached the London terminus they found a cabman who was quite familiar with Stocking-makers' Hall. It was in a narrow back street in the heart of the City, and Ella thought it looked a very dingy place. But she was much surprised when she passed through a noble courtyard, and into a large comfortable room overlooking large gardens, well laid out, and fountains playing.

"Why," said Ella, "I thought ground in the City was worth some fabulous sum an inch; how can they afford to keep so much space for gardens? What a large profit they must make out of stockings!"

Presently there came into the room Mr Carpenter. He was a comfortable-looking old gentleman, and moved and spoke slowly, and gave the general impression that he represented a good old-fashioned company of gentlemen who did not mean to be hurried in anything. Everything about the place looked so quaint. The courtyard in front of the house, and the gardens at the back, prevented the noise of the streets from reaching the rooms. Ella, who has a fancy for old tales and legends, was picturing to herself the London merchants and citizens of two or three centuries ago, dressed according to the fashion of those times, walking in the gardens. On the walls hung portraits of old Stocking-makers. Tix, who was always in a hurry, was out of patience with Mr Carpenter's slow method of conducting the conversation. And then it took a long time to find the documents relating to the apprenticeship gifts for that year, for Mr Carpenter looked over the papers leisurely ; but at last they were found, and the child who had received the gift in the place of Myfanwy was described as Jane Short, daughter of

William Short, grocer's assistant; and the member of the Company who had proposed her was Mr Micklejohn. Tix asked where Mr Micklejohn could be found. Mr Carpenter said he would be at the Hall in a few minutes, if he had not already arrived, as there would be a Court held that day. Tix found that a Court meant a meeting of the old gentlemen for the settling of business relating to the Company. Mr Carpenter then gave directions to his secretary, who is always ready in an anteroom to attend to the great man (for is not the clerk of the Honourable and Worshipful Company of Stocking-makers a great man? and does he not appear robed in his chariot in the civic procession on Lord Mayor's Day?) to have Lord and Lady Tixover conducted to the waiting-room to see Mr Micklejohn.

The servant (also a jolly-looking slow old boy, who wore a costume something like a parish beadle's, cocked-hat included, and who had a nose and complexion that showed an intimate connection with port-wine) went before them up a grand old staircase, the walls of which were hung with fine paintings.

“What a nice house!” said Ella, as they walked up. “I thought all the places in the City were dingy and small.”

Jones, the servant, was pleased with this praise of his place. He quite looked upon it as his, for he had been born on the premises, being the son of the man who had held his position before him. He knew every corner of the place, and all the old gentlemen—(they all look old, and as if they had never been young). Jones was the porter, though he looked too dignified to do any carrying; and as he sat in his big chair (by a large fire in winter) in the porter’s room, he would get up and bow reverently whenever any of the old gentlemen passed through. When he heard Ella’s exclamation of delight on the stairs, he felt quite inclined to patronise the young people; so he asked them if he should show them over the house. You see, his idea of Lords never got beyond the Lord Mayor. To him, the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor was the greatest man alive. Jones had heard of the Queen, but principally in church on a Sunday—in that beautiful little church in Cornhill which belongs to the Stocking-

makers' Company, where Jones attended in full costume, and always followed Mr Carpenter, who represented the Company on Sundays, up to his pew, and stood majestically, with his cocked-hat in his hand and his red nose shining, while Mr Carpenter walked into his pew. The same ceremony also attended Mr Carpenter's departure from church. Jones, I say, had heard of the Queen, both in church and at the toasts at the dinners of the Company; but he could not think of her as a reality. He had even seen the Prince of Wales and the other young Princes when they had come to the City to dine; but then they had only been invited by that great man the Lord Mayor, and had had, in Jones's opinion, a very good dinner given to them. Therefore, you may suppose that Jones did not think Lord Tixover a great man; and Tix, entering into the joke, allowed Jones to patronise him, and show him the house.

The paintings in the various rooms were really worth looking at, and pleased Ella greatly. She looked with much interest at a painting of Mary Queen of Scots, worth some thousands of pounds; but Jones wanted

her to admire full-length portraits of old Stocking-makers in their robes. One man, who had been Lord Mayor, and was represented in his robes of office, was Jones's delight. Then Ella saw the banqueting room, and sat in the big chair, and tried to imagine herself chairman of the Stocking-makers.

"But where are the stockings?" said Ella, at which Jones looked puzzled. He had never connected the Worshipful Company of Stocking-makers with stockings.

Jones now conducted Tix and Ella into the waiting-room, and went to inquire if Mr Micklejohn had arrived. He found that gentleman, and informed him that Lord and Lady Tixover were wishing to see him. The little old gentleman went quite in a fluttering state to Tix, and Tix at once told him his business. He said he was sorry that the case had been so misrepresented to him; but Miss Harrison, the mistress of the orphan school, had persuaded him that the girl who had obtained the gift was more deserving than Myfanwy Cwm. Tix said he merely wished to investigate the matter, and to point out to

people who have the dispensing of charities that there is often a great deal of mismanagement. They were standing near a door that led into another room, and a little old gentleman passed them, making a pleasant bow to them as he passed. "That," said Mr Micklejohn, with great reverence, "is one of our oldest members—he is eighty-five." Ella, who thought all the old gentlemen she had seen looked much the same age, could not understand Mr Micklejohn speaking with such reverence of age. But he evidently considered himself a gay young fellow at sixty-five, and naturally looked up to a man twenty years older.

Presently, another little old gentleman passed (they all looked little and had white hair). "And that," said Mr Micklejohn, with still greater reverence, "is the Father of the Company. He is ninety-five."

"O," said Ella, "fancy being the father of so many old gentlemen!"

Tix and Ella now took their departure, thinking more of all they had seen than of Myfanwy; for they had been very much amused during the couple of hours they had been in the Stocking-makers' Hall.

CHAPTER IX.

WAITING GENTLEWOMEN.

“ A gentlewoman
Who well could rule, and yet submits to serve ;
Who well could love and yet submits to be
A trivial creature : this is heroism.
The woman who can thus obey is wise—
She may obey ME.” —*Old Play.*

THERE was much laughter at the dinner-table at Ashridge that evening. Ella described in the liveliest manner all she had seen at Stocking-makers' Hall.

“ You would be quite amused,” she said, “ to see how much ceremony there is amongst them ; and there are no stockings. As far as I could understand, the little old gentlemen were mostly wine merchants or ‘ something in the City,’ and old Jones, the porter, is such a character ! I wonder whether

there are any more wonderful old places in the City like that. If there are, I wish you would take me to see them, Tix. I have often read in the newspapers of the dinners these companies give, but I never imagined they had such beautiful places; and when I heard of the Fishmongers' or Goldsmiths' Company, I thought it meant really a lot of fishmongers or goldsmiths. But only fancy! the porter was quite surprised when I asked where the stockings were kept!"

"Ah," said Tix, "these old city companies have a great many charities in their power, and a great deal might be done if the Government would look up these charities, and see that they are properly dispensed. In fact, I should like to see all charities in the hands of the Government. If ever I take my place in the House, I will bring in a bill for appointing a Minister of Public Charity."

"Why don't you take your place, Tix-over?" said Lord Wraysbury.

"He has been too much engaged in rescuing distressed damsels hitherto," said Lady Waynflete.

"I intend to make him take his place at

the opening of the next session," said Ella ;
"and Lord Beechampton will introduce him.
I have asked him."

"Then we shall have another young reformer," said Lord Wraysbury, "and Tixover will fancy that he is one of those born to set the world right."

"No," said Tix. "I think I shall do my work modestly. I shall stick to my favourite hobby—a Minister for Public Charities. From inquiries that I made to day at the Stocking-makers' Hall, I find there are many old almshouses in the City. These houses stand, for the most part, on valuable ground, which would sell for a large sum of money. I will give you the particulars of one set of almshouses, which I heard of to-day. They were built and endowed by Dame Alice Shaw, widow of Sir Thomas Shaw, Knight, citizen and Lord Mayor of London. There were eight houses for eight poor women, being maidens or widows. Each woman was to receive five shillings a week, with certain articles, such as coals, woollen cloth, &c., at appropriate times of the year. All this was left in trust of one of the City companies, of which Sir Thomas

Shaw was a member. Now, Dame Alice Shaw died a hundred years ago, and therefore the money she left must have considerably increased in value. Yet the eight poor women who live in these houses still receive five shillings a week, with the other things mentioned in Dame Alice's will. We all know that five shillings a hundred years ago represented a very different sum from what it does now. Dame Alice evidently considered it was sufficient for a poor woman to live upon ; but it is not so in these days. And the ground that these eight miserable little houses are built upon—for they are a hundred years old—would fetch enough money to build and endow at least eight more, if not double that number. And the women who are candidates for these houses now must necessarily have something else to live on besides the allowance of five shillings a week. The sum that Dame Alice Shaw left must represent a very much larger sum than it did then ; but who uses the surplus ? I quote this as only one of many such cases."

"It seems to me," said Lady Waynflete, "that the Worshipful Company of Stocking-

makers have made you forget all about Myfanwy and her grievances."

"We have agreed to have a consultation to-morrow on that subject," said Tix.

"I am much interested in it," said Lady Waynflete; "not only because Myfanwy was my school-fellow, but because her present position gives me a chance of carrying out a pet theory of mine. You see we ladies can have pet theories as well as the gentlemen."

"Yes," said Tix; "I should like the country to be governed entirely by ladies. I am sure they would do better than our present House of Commons. But what is your theory?"

"The idea perhaps came to me in consequence of the position which I occupied previous to my marriage. I was a governess, as you know; and I was brought up in a school where most of the girls were destined to be governesses. Since I have occupied my present position, it has occurred to me that there is so little work which gentlewomen can do—indeed, they can only be governesses. There are already more governesses than are

wanted, especially as every small tradesman thinks his daughter is too good for service, and must be a governess. Now I have an idea that women of position might have one or two or three, or even more, young gentlewomen in their houses in a capacity that is not menial. I have proposed it to Lady Wraysbury, and she quite agrees with me."

"Yes," said Lady Wraysbury; "she is quite a philanthropist, and she teaches me my duty."

"I want," said Lady Waynflete, "to persuade every lady I know to take gentlewomen into her house. Lady Wraysbury is going to do it, and I mean to do it so soon as the dower-house is finished."

"Where is the dower-house?" said Ella.

"It is on the estate," said Lord Waynflete. "There was a tumbledown old dower-house there before, and my father had it pulled down, and is building a new one, and when it is finished, Amy and I are to make our establishment there. I am anxious to remain near my father to help him to look after the estate. Amy is always building castles in the air as to what she will do in the new

house. She is quite the architect of it, for it is being built just as she directs."

"My notion is," said Lady Waynflete, "to have a couple of young waiting gentlewomen, who shall be under the care of the housekeeper, and who shall learn the various domestic duties. This will fit them to be good wives ; and they shall lack no chance of getting husbands. I have begged Lady Wraysbury to keep three or four such ladies, and she has promised to do so. Now, if I can get Lady Tixover to promise me that she will not only have some waiting gentlewomen herself, but will recommend other ladies to do so, I shall consider that I have already found employment for several young ladies."

"I will promise you," said Ella, "that I will take three ladies ; and I will ask Miranda to do the same. But what duties do you assign to the young people ?"

"I consider," said Lady Waynflete, "that one might take the entire supervision of the linen for a month—under the housekeeper of course,—and another the ordering of the meals, and another the making herself generally useful to the mistress. Then each should

change every month, so that the same set of duties only belonged to one lady for a month at a time. The ladies should take their meals with the housekeeper, and come in the drawing-room in the evening, and come to dinner by invitation on any occasion."

"It is a capital idea," said Lord Wraysbury, "and I hope Lady Waynflete will commence to carry it out by taking charge of the poor little Welsh girl."

"But don't you think Lady Tachbrook ought to be asked whether she will not prefer to keep Myfanwy herself?" said Tix.

"Yes, perhaps she ought," said Lord Waynflete; "we will ask her."

The next morning there was a letter from Miranda to Ella, to say that Lord Beechampton and Captain Grainger had arrived. So Tix and Ella and Myfanwy left Ashridge that day.

CHAPTER X.

THE EARL OF BEECHAMPTON.

“ Ἡδυεπής—λιγύς—ἀγορητής
τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδὴ
τῷ δ' ἤδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
ἐφθίαθ'.”

LORD BEECHAMPTON is as unique as Beechampton Castle itself. Whoso has seen that castle, by Severn stream, with its aged towers, vast gateways, open courtyards, dark dungeons, is face to face with ancient historic events—events that have moulded the English race in no slight degree. Whoso is fortunate enough to meet Beechampton, must at once recognise a Nestor among English gentlemen—one of those whom a poetical *laudator temporis acti* has described as—

“ A strong generation, who drank, fought, and kissed ;
Whose hands never trembled, whose shots never missed.”

Since he, a septuagenarian, has become lord of the castle, and of the great estates of his ancestors, he has become a power. Warwick, the kingmaker, at Middleham, could hardly have held nobler and fairer court than Beechampton at Beechampton. In the House of Commons he had spoken with independent vigorous Toryism years before. Now the same voice, as young and buoyant as ever, was heard in the House of Lords, startling that porphyrian chamber, and making boy-peers wonder how he could thus preserve his youth. The Earl had startled a good many boys in his time, deer-stalking and fox-hunting; now he did it as agorettes, mixing force and fire with that calm wisdom which is gained by long and healthy life in society greatly varied. The man who has been intimate with wits and beauties, and also with wild creatures haunting moor and forest, has a kind of knowledge not obtainable by the more modern youngster, who begins his day with the kettledrum, and ends it in the billiard-room, interposing theatre or music-hall, or some worse dissipation. It has been said of somebody that he was a lord among wits, and

a wit among lords. Beechampton was a wit among wits, and it would be hard to find his peer among peers.

His fiat grew to be fame. His castle grew to be the most popular country-house in England. His foxhounds had better runs than any other packs in England. Once a cunning vixen ran into a cottage ; there was nobody at home but the baby, whose mother had just stepped out for a gossip. The vixen cleverly buried herself under the clothes in the cradle. The hounds scented her ; routed her out ; killed her there and then without hurting the baby. Perchance, as it was the lady pack, they had sympathy with the mother's feelings.

Winter festivities at Beechampton were kept up in the fine old style. There was a pleasant artistic blending of the ancient with the modern method. Villagers presented mystery-plays ; pretty girls acted proverbs and charades ; a Welsh bard sang englynions to the harp ; a famous prima-donna sang choice solos, accompanied by the best pianist of the day ; two amateur actors of renown brought in a couple of scenes of going

and returning to a Christmas festival—one being a lean jester, and the other a fat friar. There was a third actor in the going scene, by the way—a favourite white donkey, that had often done duty in a pony-carriage. Thus it ran—

SCENE I.—HOW THEY WENT.

THE JESTER.

Heigho!
Through the snow,
On an obstinate ass that hates to go!
 But who in the world is gladder?
For it makes me warm
'Mid the bitter storm,
While I scarce can see my comrade's form,
 To fillip the beast with a bladder.

Heigho!
On we go
To kiss the maids 'neath misletoe!
 When the donkey kicks and stumbles
Then think I
Of the turkey's thigh,
And the mighty chine, and the dainty pie
 That's made of the red-deer's umbles.

Heigho!
Madge, you know,
Wicked young witch with an eye like the sloe—
 Was never a partridge plumper;
With me she'll dance,
No folly of France,
But a country measure all frolic and prance,
 For faith she's a famous jumper!

Heigho !
 Through the snow
 I see the old squire's windows glow,
 And I hear the music already—
 There's the grunting tune
 Of the big bassoon,
 And the long trombone that slopes up to the moon ;
 Now then, old ass ! go steady.

There was a fine snowstorm of cut paper,
 while thus the jester soliloquised.

SCENE II.—HOW THEY GOT BACK.

THE FRIAR.

Friend Costard, hold me up, I beg ;
 I'fecks ! we've made a night of it.
 If I tumble, my skull will crack like an egg,
 And I'm ready to faint with fright of it.
 But I feel like a fool : for where's my mule ?
 It's not in the shed . . . ill omen ;
 And trudging afoot will by no means suit
 The ecclesiastic abdomen.

We've got to pass by the grim Earl's grave,
 Where corpse-lights flutter and flicker ;
 And as I'm a clerk I needn't be brave,
 Though I'm full of love and liquor.
 O I'm full of love, by the stars above,
 With a girl who shall have my benison :
 Sweeter, I wis, from her lips a kiss
 Than a mouthful of young doe-venison.

I'fackins, Costard, that was a slip ;
 And, by the Lady Mary,
 I shan't be fit, if I break my hip,
 To make love to the maid of the dairy.

O her merry black eyes where laughter lies !
And her lips that pout so merrily !
Sweet Madge of mine, you 're a girl divine,
And I love to kiss you verily.

THE JESTER.

Heigho !
Down you go
With your tonsured head in the frozen snow,
For your brag has made me madder !
Madge of thine !
Howl and whine,
Fattest boar among monkish swine,
While I pummel thy head with my bladder.

Froissart or Ariosto or the beloved Sir Walter might perchance describe adequately the great hall of Beechampton Castle when the Earl's revels were in progress. I cannot. I can only say that his first Christmas revels at Beechampton, which occurred in the year precedent to that we have reached, were unequalled by anything since the Earl of Leicester held pageant at Kenilworth to delight that virgin Queen of whom no scandal is ever talked—if indeed they were equalled then.

Now I have to do with Beechampton at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill, whither he had arrived before Tix returned from Ashridge manor. Almost simultaneously came Cap-

tain Grainger, who had not much time to spare, but who was really anxious to see his lost passengers again. It may well be imagined that the dear old Captain got a warm welcome from Tom Jones and Miranda. It is very difficult to describe in words the confidence which voyagers feel in a commander who obviously is as much at home on sea as on land—perhaps rather more. Just imagine it! There you are—a hundred of you perhaps—utterly ignorant how to battle with the sea, all depending on the will and the skill of one man. Will as well as skill he needs—power as well as knowledge. It is no trivial matter to carry this tremendous responsibility on one's shoulder, year after year. It is too like the burden of Atlas.

Beechampton had, of course, come to see his favourite Ella; but as Ella was away with Tix, he had to put up with Miranda. Beechampton always liked a lady to talk to.

“I like the merest baby girl
 (Such are the words that *I* pen);
 In time she'll be an orient pearl —
 For pearls in oysters ripen.

“ I also like your forward chits,
Getting a little older,
Who just begin to get their wits,
And learn to show the shoulder.

“ But best of all I love to meet,
Whether in woodland shady,
On summer lawn, in city street,
A true poetic lady.”

Thus wrote the Earl in somebody's album.
It may have been Miranda's.

It is scarce requisite to say that he and Captain Grainger and Miranda and Tom Jones got on excellent well. They were made to suit each other. The Earl, lineal descendant of the Viking Hastings, felt thorough sympathy with the modern mariner who bridges the great gulf between this little islet England and our mighty Indian empire. And Miranda the mermaid caught his fancy, so much, that I fear Ella will be jealous (if there's a spice of jealousy in her complexion) when she comes home. And as to Tom Jones—well, the man who did not appreciate *him* would not be Lord Beechampton. Sir Harold is simply the best young fellow in the world : at any rate, Miranda thinks so.

Well may it be supposed that the Earl

was equally at home with Doctor Septimus and Oliver Olifaunt, neither of whom he had seen before. Such colloquy as this occurred when they had shaken down together.

The Earl.—"You must come and stay with me this Christmas, Doctor. You will be amused with our old-fangled festivities. Won't you come too, Mr Olifaunt?"

O. O.—"Come! Of course I will. Only too pleased to be in your grand old place. You and I have both been travellers, my Lord."

The Earl.—"Yes; travellers about whom no particular fuss was made. If an American had come at the head of an expedition to find *me* in Africa, I'd have punched his head, just as I would a poacher's. There's too much sentiment mixed up with geographical exploring in these days."

The Doctor.—"Neither Odysseus nor Herodotus had expeditions sent in search of them. We can forgive poor young Telemachos, as things were, for desiring to find his father. But his father knew his way home."

O. O.—"Odysseus I admire; only, what with Circe and Calypso, he seems to have been

rather retarded in his return to his faithful Penelopeia. One is rather reminded of a great traveller who found black types of Circe and Calypso in Central Africa; and, while admitting their fascinations, he called them *hussies*."

The Doctor—"You and I must have a talk together on several points, Lord Beechampton. I think I have pretty well exhausted our young friend Odysseus Olifaunt."

O. O.—"Have you? We shall see, Doctor Tachbrook."

CHAPTER XI.

SEROZA'S SWEETHEART.

*"Cuius octavum trepidavit aetas
Claudere lustrum."*

HAROLD TACHBROOK, having given up the management of his cousin's estate, had now but two things to do in the world. His daughter was off his hands. There was his father to look after; but that noble old octogenarian was dependent on nobody. He was glad to talk to eccentric folk like O. O. and Captain Grainger; but, if there was nobody to converse with, the Doctor could talk with the shadows of the past—in memory and in books—and his pleasantest colloquist of all was himself.

"I and Me," he was wont to say, "are two

different entities. We are dual. The right hand has another function from the left. The right side of the brain works otherwise from the left. *I* is active, positive; *Me* is passive, negative. There is in every human being a reflex of God and the world, of man and woman, of all the marvellous duality which runs through nature. *I* ordains; *Me* obeys. When I am left alone I wander into the garden, and jot down the endless dialogue between *I* and *Me*."

The Doctor was not at this time much left alone. He had inexhaustible converse with O. O. and Grainger. The long-shadowed lawn in autumn was much traversed by these confabulists. Grainger's time was short: like a man of the world and of the sea, he was resolved to enjoy it. Many men had he met in his wide voyages; yet never such a daring traveller as O. O., nor so wise an untravelled man as Doctor Septimus. With O. O. he became peculiarly intimate, as that inveterate wanderer had determined to go out with him on his next voyage, which was to Melbourne.

"I'll have a try at tropical Australia," said

O. O. "The fellows who go out think of nothing but sheep. There's no knowing what lakes and volcanoes there are in that unexplored island. I shall go there; and, when I have used Australia up, explore the rest of the group of islands. I shall first, however, show myself in London."

"For how long?" said Grainger.

"One night only. Come with me. I'll introduce you on a Saturday night to the Chandos Club."

"Why Saturday?"

"It's the night when everybody is there. I wonder what day of the week you are likely to leave Liverpool?"

"Monday is my usual day."

"Capital! We'll dine at the 'Chandos,' have a long night in the smoking-room, and then go off to join the ship at your convenience."

"Agreed!" said Grainger. "I must be off in a day or two. I'll secure for you the cosiest cabin we have, and telegraph the moment the day of departure is fixed."

"Thanks! I know you won't tell anybody I am in England."

There was an amusing scene at the Chandos Club when O. O. *did* turn up one Saturday at about eight o'clock. He took Grainger with him. He walked up the steps to the brilliantly-lighted portal. The porter started; so did the man in the glass case who looks after the letters. O. O. walked coolly on, as if Pall Mall were as familiar to him as the Andes. When they reached the dining-room of that pleasantest of all clubs, where the cook is an artist, and where strangers are not snubbed, there were dozens of men to greet Olifaunt.

Eustace Fane was the first.

"By Jove, Olifaunt," he said, "where in the world have you been hiding yourself? Writing a book, of course."

"Very much so. Everybody always does. Fane, this is my friend, Captain Grainger of the *Mighty Metropolis*. Grainger, my friend Fane is—well, I don't know what he isn't; but he's a good fellow. Shall we dine together?"

The three dined together, and were the observed of all observers, as one Shakespeare says. Indeed, in the course of the evening,

Olifaunt was completely surrounded by old friends. When they had luxuriously dined, O. O. said—

“Shall we play billiards? If we go in to the smoking-room I shall be mobbed.”

“I never could play,” said Grainger.

“I’ll play you,” said Fane.

“All right! As I haven’t played since I came to England, and never saw a billiard-table on the Amazon, you’ll give me odds.”

“How many points in fifty?”

“Pooh!” said O. O., “let’s play a thousand up, and you give me two hundred. When a fellow hasn’t played for five years, and won’t for five years, he may as well have a thorough night of it.”

Eustace Fane was not to be astonished. He took the proposal quietly. He said—

“Well, two hundred is long odds, and a thousand a long game. Never mind. If billiards will freshen your mind for your next journey, I’ll be the victim.”

Olifaunt’s first break was three hundred and seventy-five.

“Thank you,” said Fane; “quite enough for me. There are billiard-rooms in that

country of pretty Amazons that you have been investigating."

"Of course there are," quoth O. O., "and a pretty Amazon playing billiards is a very charming sight."

.

There has been anticipation. The flight of O. O. with Grainger, and the amazement at the Chandos Club, occurred not until some other things had occurred—one whereof was a confabulation between Seroza and her sweetheart.

Sweetheart! Delicious dissyllable! Those dear old pleasant English words, which English folk begin to be afraid of, are so intensely full of delight.

"Then come kiss me, Sweet-and-twenty,"

sings our supreme poet. Where's the man who dare sing like it now? There are writers who twaddle and tire; there are writers who strain and sweat: but the writer whom we all love, is the writer who loves to write. The author of that "Come kiss me," found writing as easy and pleasant as kissing.

Now for the dialogue.

Harold.—"Here is a pleasant corner under the yew-hedge, Seroza. I want to have a talk with you of the utmost gravity."

Seroza.—"O dear, don't frighten me, please, or I might possibly faint. I know exactly what you are going to say. You are going to tell me that I am a wild sea-creature, and ought to be sent to the Zoological Gardens instead of being married to anybody."

Harold.—"Be serious, child"—

Seroza (interrupting).—"How can I be serious when I am happy? I'll be serious when I am miserable, but not to-day. Is there not lovely weather? Have I not *you* to talk to me? Talk nonsense to me—kiss me—do what you will with me; only, please, don't be serious."

Harold.—"You won't, my darling, it is clear. I only wanted to ask you whether you really and truly thought you could pass the rest of your life with a man old enough to be your father, and whose daughter is nearly as old as you?"

Seroza.—"I really and truly think you are very foolish to ask the question. And now,

as you have talked in this way, and shown that, like most men, you don't understand women, let me say to you—*Be serious.*”

Harold.—“ I will.”

Seroza.—“ You wish to marry me ? ”

Harold.—“ I do.”

Seroza.—“ The orthodox arrangement is, as I am informed, that the wife is to ‘ love, honour, and obey ’ her husband. I dare say this is right, but I should like to try a new experiment. I am very willing to love and honour *you*, but will you give me back my pledge, and obey *me* for the first year ? ”

Harold.—“ Always.”

Seroza.—“ Ah, no. I can see that women must obey men in the long run. But I should so like to try what would happen if I were mistress for a year—absolute mistress, you know.”

Harold.—“ You shall. We will try—till you are tired.”

Seroza.—“ O, I shall never be tired. My rule begins from to-day, does it not ? ”

Harold.—“ Yes.”

Seroza.—“ Then remember, sir, that I won't have you talk to me any more about being

older than I am. I won't have it. It is an insult to me. When there is love, what is age?"

Harold.—"Anybody can see you were educated on a desert island, Seroza."

Seroza.—"I was. I nearly killed a man there who ought to have been my friend and protector. I was so frightened that I lost power of speech. If no one had come to take me away, I think I could have lived a happy life there, for there was plenty of fruit to eat, and the island was very beautiful."

Harold.—"You would soon have grown tired of it."

Seroza.—"I suppose so. It always seems to me that the worst failings of human creatures arise from their getting tired. It is a mistake to get tired of anything."

Harold.—"You are right, my darling. If two armies have to fight, the army whose general is first tired will be beaten. And I suppose in the case of man and wife, the one who first gets tired will have to submit."

Seroza.—"You wretch! If you ever dare to get tired of me, I'll inflict upon you some

ingenious method of torture, and then leave you for ever and ever and ever."

Harold.—"And two days more. Never mind, Seroza. You shall have your way for a year, 'pon honour. If you get tired of having your own way before the twelve months expire, you will have to pay me a tribute of kisses."

Seroza.—"And you *will* obey for a year?"

Harold.—"I will."

Seroza.—"Kiss me then."

CHAPTER XII.

TOM JONES AT HOME.

“O, for the faculty of Walter Landor,
In prose a Shakespeare, and in verse a Martial,
With just a soft touch of the Veronese !”

ELEVEN is a mystic number. Why it is so must be taught esoterically by some greater authority in numeration than the present writer. Every even number is the sum of two primes: $11 + 1 = 12$, the number which would be our radix if arithmetic were civilised. How eleven would behave if, as it ought, it held the position now held by nine, is a problem difficult to investigate. The fact that it takes eleven people to make a side at cricket proves sufficingly that the number is a remarkable one.

Tix and Ella hurried back to Rothescamp,

on learning that Beechampton and Grainger had arrived; whence it happened that on the lawn of that quaint old house upon the hill eleven people were assembled. It was a pleasant autumnal afternoon. The swallows were beginning to realise the description in Théophile Gautier's charming lyric—

“ Les hirondelles sur le toit
Tennent des conciliabules.”

Everywhere in the hedgerows the bindweed-bell shone like a cup of Marpessian marble; clematis was turning to old-man's-beard; bryony leaves were burning to all possible browns and purples. The birds resumed their song of spring. It was the time between the mulberry and the medlar.

On the lawn of Rothescamp you might have seen a pleasant company. Tom Jones and his wife had arranged matters so that Doctor Septimus had O. O. and Grainger close to him, knowing well that he “loved to talk with marineres who come from a far countrie.” Harold, it might have been observed, seemed quite happy to be near Seroza; nor did Seroza appear to object.

The Viscountess lounged lazily in a garden-chair under a great cedar, and could just catch the susurrus or echo of the converse between the Doctor and his friends. Her restless spouse oscillated from point to point, and listened to the talkers, and talked himself, and brought Ella 'essence of talk. Hugh Thurston and Myfanwy were apt to furtively disappear beneath an alley of limes.

Beechampton.—"It is very good of you, Tixover, to run about the world rescuing distressed damsels and improving the condition of married schoolboys ; still, does not your wife get tired of it ? I know her disposition, and that she is as sweet-tempered as she is high-spirited. She was quite like a daughter to me for many a year ; my wild-fowl knew her light tread, and I knew the light touch of her hand."

Tix.—"We suit. Look at her. She only hears a part of what we say ; yet, though she knows we are talking of her, she has not energy or curiosity enough to come and listen. Yet, if something momentous occurred, she would be full of life at once. She basks in the sun like a lazy tigress ; but just

see what will happen if the tigress has work to do."

Ella.—"What's that you're saying about me, Tix?"

Tom Jones.—"He was only calling you a tigress."

Grainger (who was stretched on the turf, and drinking something cool and effervescent).—"I did not think, when I got ashore on that island, it would bring me into such charming company."

O. O..—"The charming company can retaliate, old fellow. You will have to take me to Australia, and bring me back in a year or two. Won't I solve the problem of that little island?"

Harold.—"Are you determined to go? I thought you meant to explore England."

O. O..—"England after. I shall study England on my way out with Grainger. I have sent to my bookseller for all the English guide-books he can find, from John Murray's downwards and backwards. I want everything topographical, even to 'John Bunclé' and 'Drunken Barnaby.' Those will be jolly books for me to collate of quiet nights at sea;

and then Grainger and I can talk them over when we drink our port. Mind you have some good port on board, old fellow."

Grainger.—"No fear. Moreover, there will be some madeira that has been twice round the world. Nobody but you and I will taste it."

Miranda.—"Dear me, I feel inclined to go too. Shall we, Tom?"

Beechampton.—"Not a bit of it. You are all coming to spend Christmas with me at the Castle. I wish the whole party could be there; but Grainger *must* go, and that wilful fellow Olifaunt *will* go."

O. O.—"I can't 'sit at home at ease.' I have the swallow's instinct, and must be travelling. I'll come and see you when I begin my English travels."

Seroza.—"May I make a proposal?"

Tom.—"To whom?"

Seroza.—"To everybody. When Mr Olifaunt comes back, why shouldn't we all make a tour of England together, taking private omnibuses and plenty of provisions?"

Beechampton.—"One objection is, that there will then be so many babies about. Why,

those two babies under the limes will be having more babies of their own by that time."

A wicked glint of sunlight had fallen upon Hugh and Myfanwy, and nobody could doubt that their lips were in contact. They thought themselves safe beneath the heavy boughs. They would have made quite a pretty picture for Millais or Du Maurier, Hugh being decidedly a handsome Saxon boy, and Myfanwy a Welsh girl of the higher type, realising her pretty name, which signifies *My wave of the sea*. Please remember that the *f* of Wales is the *v* of England.

Tom.—"Your young people are getting on fast, Tix."

Tix.—"Aren't they? Never mind. Thurston, I want you."

Thereupon Thurston came forward, leaving Myfanwy under the lime boughs.

Tix.—"No; bring Myfanwy."

Myfanwy came. The two young people stood in front of a kind of areopagus, nine judges in all.

Tix.—"You two young people are going a little too fast. As I have helped you to get out of your difficulties, I shall expect you

to obey orders. There's no harm in the world in a girl and a boy kissing each other, if it means nothing more."

Beechampton.—"Thurston should remember that he has made one mistake, and that the General, whom I know well, may be afraid of his making another."

Miranda.—"Yes; and Myfanwy should remember that her education has not been finished—that she is a child, nothing else—that it is much too early for her to fall in love."

Doctor Septimus.—"Treat them as children. Hugh Thurston, you are going to college; Myfanwy Cwm, you are going to service. A few years hence, when you, Hugh, have taken a good degree, and Myfanwy has shown that in a ladylike way she can serve a lady, they may think of each other. Perhaps by that time each will be thinking of some one else."

O. O.—"Capital advice, Dr Tachbrook. I have seen young people in all parts and of all races, and they always want to develop too fast. People should come of age at forty. The greatest fools in England are those who come of age at eighteen."

Tix.—"Well, I shall consider this settled.

I know General Thurston will send Hugh to Oxford ; and if he does not work well I shall be greatly disappointed in him."

Hugh.—" I *will* work well, my Lord. Nobody was ever kind to me before you, and I will do all I can to prove that I don't forget your kindness."

Miranda.—" And now, Myfanwy, you also have work to do. I mean either to keep you here or send you to Lady Waynflete ; that is uncertain. In any case, you must conduct yourself as a lady, though you will have to obey."

Tom.—" Every lady has to obey her husband."

Miranda.—" Don't interrupt, you troublesome pirate. I want this girl to understand that her future life depends on her behaving well now. She has a capital opportunity, and may be Mrs Thurston a few years hence, if the General does not object."

Ella.—" There must be no more kissing, I suggest."

Tix.—" They shall have one kiss when they part—Hugh for college, and Myfanwy for service. But if they are discovered kissing

before that pathetic period, they shall both be well whipped. That's my decision."

Beechampton.—"I quite agree with you. The disease of the day is precocity. The boy who thinks himself a man at seventeen is old at seventy."

O. O.—"Old at seventy! Aren't we all old at seventy?"

Beechampton.—"At that age I was a boy."

Miranda.—"You are not so very old now, Lord Beechampton. You are immortally young. To be with you is to drink the breath of youth."

Tix.—"I do think Beechampton might live for ever. But now, Lady Tachbrook, what will you do with these two young fools whom we have been lecturing? I am in correspondence with Thurston, and he seems to think my views about his son are right. Will you keep the girl out of his way?"

Miranda.—"The housekeeper shall take her in hand, after which, I'll see what can be done with her. Myfanwy, you had better go in-doors."

Tix.—"And you, Tom, had better go for

a long walk. No more kissing; consider your cuticle."

Beechampton.—"Your Quixotisms get you lots of trouble, Tix."

O. O.—"We are all a little mad. Landor makes Diogenes say that great men have greater faults than little men can find room for."

Beechampton.—"Now, all of you who can must come to Beechampton Castle at Christmas. I shall go from here to Ashridge, for the Marquis, you know, is so old a friend of mine that fellows like Richard Richards have used my name to kill his trout. Rather hard that the beggar didn't wear a waistcoat. You'll come to Beechampton Castle at Christmas, Doctor Tachbrook?"

Doctor Septimus.—"With pleasure. We will all come who can come. I knew the old place when you were a boy, Beechampton, and there were grand revels there."

Beechampton.—"Those antique revels have not fallen out of fashion. We will try to make them worthy of your criticism. Tix and I are in it. The Marquis and Marchioness of Wraysbury always go out of

England for the winter ; but I shall make Waynflete and his wife promise to come, and I daresay they can bring little Lady Mary."

Tix.—" Little Lady Mary is the cleverest girl of her age in England. May I bring Gilbert Tachbrook and his wife ? "

Beechampton.—" There's plenty of room in the Castle."

Tix.—" Ella, look up your sea-costume. I shall telegraph at once for the *Palinoura* to be ready."

Ella.—" *My* sea-costume is a towel."

CHAPTER XIII.

A LITTLE LECTURE.

“When ladies deign to talk to girls,
The sayings that they drop are pearls.”

SAID Ella, one afternoon, as she was sitting in Miranda's own room in the twilight, just before the first dinner-bell—“We must decide whether Myfanwy shall stay with you or go to Lady Waynflete, for I had a letter from her Ladyship this morning, saying that Lord Beechampton goes to Ashridge from here, and it will be a good opportunity for the child to travel with him if she is to go.”

“I should like to keep her very much myself,” said Miranda, “for I am charmed with her; but as she was a schoolfellow of Lady Waynflete's, perhaps it is better that

she should go. I shall, however, carry out the idea of waiting gentlewomen. I think it is an excellent notion, and hope many ladies will be induced to adopt it. I think I can manage to keep three, Ella ; and then, you know," with a mischievous glance at Ella, "there may be an increase in the family ; and I should like a middle-aged gentlewoman to be head-nurse, and she will be able to keep the younger ladies in order."

"O, bother the increase in the family ; it's what I call a nuisance," said Ella. "But your notion of a gentlewoman as head-nurse is capital, although it is not new. Several ladies have advocated it, but there are so few women sensible enough to take such a post ; they think it is degrading to be called a nurse."

"I think, Ella, if we were to form a society for the employment of gentlewomen in various ways, we might soon do a great deal of good."

"I see one objection, Miranda, to employing waiting gentlewomen. There are many women who will be jealous of their husbands."

“Ah, I didn’t think of that. I pity them and their husbands too. But surely, Ella,” said Miranda, again looking mischievously, “you *must* settle down soon, and then will you not carry out Lady Waynflete’s notion?”

“I suppose we shall settle before next session, as Tix is going to take his place in the House; and then I shall certainly set up three little maids of honour. I must choose pretty girls, for I can’t bear ugly people. To sit near an ugly or awkward or ill-dressed or harsh-voiced woman at dinner is enough to give one indigestion. Ugliness in men is quite a different thing. Captain Grainger is charmingly ugly. I never admired a man more.”

“Ah! but he is more charming at sea; he quite fascinated me when we were on the *Mighty Metropolis*.”

“Lady Waynflete mentioned in her letter,” said Ella, “that if Myfanwy comes to her, she intends to go to the orphan school and choose two more girls; and the Marchioness has promised her that in the spring she will also have three girls from the school. The Marchioness is just leaving England for the

winter. I suppose Mrs Mowbray, who imitates Lady Waynflete, will also be having waiting gentlewomen. I wonder whether she will like pretty girls. I think, from all I have heard of her, that she will choose the sort of girl that I call priggish. Her girls will have fine chances of marrying Manchester men; only I am afraid Manchester men want either rank or beauty for their money."

"Have you noticed," said Miranda, "that young Thurston is very attentive to Myfanwy?"

"Yes, but it is merely the boyish and girlish tendency to flirt."

"They are beginning young."

"O, Mistress Miranda, it is very fine for you to talk—you were only nineteen when you married."

"Well, I suppose it will be a good thing for Myfanwy to go away, and young Thurston will soon have to take to his studies, and then he will forget all about Myfanwy. Had we not better ask her whether she will like to go to Lady Waynflete?"

Myfanwy was sent for and questioned.

She said how much she should like to go to Lady Waynflete's, but then she suddenly stopped, and looked a little unhappy.

"What is the matter?" said Miranda.

"I don't know."

"But surely you are not unhappy because you are going to Lady Wanyflete's?"

"O no; I don't think so."

"What a silly child you are! You fancy you are in love with young Thurston, and you don't like leaving him. Is it not so?"

"I don't know whether I am in love, but I do admire Mr Thurston. He is so kind to me, nobody ever was so kind to me before."

"But he is quite a boy, Myfanwy, and has to go to college and learn lessons; and you are not seventeen yet, and ought to be still in the schoolroom."

"O, but he does not seem like a boy to me, and nobody ever seemed to care so much for me before," and she began to cry.

"Now don't spoil your face, Myfanwy; it is rather a pretty one, and will be much prettier in two or three years; and then I dare say you will find plenty of people to

admire you and take an interest in you. For the present, you must not think of yourself at all, or of young Thurston. You must devote yourself to Lady Waynflete, and please her in every way you can. You are fortunate in being rescued from servitude, and you must try to grow up a good and noble girl. Lord Beechampton will take you to Ashridge ; and I dare say you will see us all again at Christmas, for most likely Lord and Lady Waynflete will go to Beechampton Castle and will bring you. Now run away and dress. You may dine with us this evening as it is your last evening with us."

Poor little Myfanwy ran away, trying to feel brave, and trying to persuade herself that she was not in love with Hugh Thurston ; but she could not help wondering whether she should go to Beechampton Castle at Christmas, and whether she should meet Hugh Thurston there.

I supposed she is not the first little girl that has fallen in love before the age of seventeen. But most girls who do fall in love at that age very soon fall out again. They think their hero perfect, until another hero arrives. Most

girls have father and mother and brothers and sisters to love, and can afford to be a little scornful to their early admirers. But can you imagine what it is to be in Myfanwy's position—to be perfectly alone in the world? She used often to think over it, and she used to wonder what sort of feeling it must be to love a father or mother or brother; and when she saw girls proud of their brothers she quite envied them; or, when she heard girls sometimes speak a little crossly to their mothers (as even the best of girls will do), she used to think that she would never speak crossly if she had a mother. This feeling of isolation gave a touch of morbidness to her character; and it is not to be wondered at that she fell in love with the first man who took any interest in her. She had no idea of marriage, but she thought she should like to be always with Hugh Thurston. She set him up in her heart as an idol to worship; and I don't think she will ever put him down again. So let us hope for her sake that Hugh will turn out a good noble fellow, and will some day marry her.

The next day Beechampton started for

Ashridge, with Myfanwy as his travelling companion.

Tix chaffed Thurston immensely about getting a last kiss ; and poor little Myfanwy looked rather shy when the moment came for saying good-bye. But Thurston did not mind Tix's chaff at all. He went boldly forward and kissed Myfanwy, and turned round to Tix, and said, " I love Myfanwy very much ; and I am not at all ashamed of kissing her. You gave me permission to do so, and I look upon you as my guardian."

" All very fine, my boy," said Tix, " but take care you don't change your mind the next time you see a pretty girl."

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY WAYNFLETE AT THE ORPHAN SCHOOL.

“ Angelina puts Emma
In a curious dilemma.”

By the time Myfanwy reached Ashridge she had made up her mind to serve Lady Waynflete with all her heart and soul ; and she thought she could do this without forgetting Hugh Thurston. She really believed that Hugh cared for her, and it gave her courage to know that there was at last one person in the world interested in her.

Lady Waynflete was exceedingly kind to her, and she found a pleasant companion in Lady Mary's governess. Lord Beechampton, who was ever the protector of ladies, and who has always been loved and admired by them,

entered heartily into Lady Waynflete's plan of having waiting gentlewomen.

"I am going to visit my old school, Lord Beechampton, and choose two more girls."

"May I go with you, Lady Waynflete ; I am fond of girls, and should like to see so many altogether ?"

"I am afraid you will be rather in the way ; and as you are a great man, they will think it necessary to show you all over the place, and then we shall never get home in time for dinner."

Lady Waynflete took an early opportunity of visiting the orphan school. Miss Harrison was also one of Miss Pinnock's old pupils, but she was a few years older than Lady Waynflete, so she only remembered her as a little girl. She appeared delighted to see her, and expressed her regret that there had been any mistake made in reference to Myfanwy.

"But why do you not take more interest in the institution, Lady Waynflete ?" said Miss Harrison. "We have been expecting to have your patronage."

"I really cannot agree with the principles on which the charity is conducted. You take

children of all grades, so that the daughter of a gentleman is side by side with the daughter of a man in the lowest grade of society. I know you have rather liberal notions yourself, and you think there is no great harm in this. I see great harm in it; and if I use my influence at all, it would be in altering this. There are many charitable institutions of the same kind as this where the same fault exists. Why not classify the children, and make one school for children of one grade, and one for children of another? Look down any voting paper that may be sent to you, and you will find, for instance, the daughter of a barrister and the daughter of a railway porter as candidates for admission. Is this fair?"

"I cannot look at it altogether in the same light as your Ladyship does. Both children equally need charity, and both get it; and if the child of lower degree happens to be the cleverer, she is likely to obtain a better position on leaving the school. But I do not see that there is any harm in that. We should all try to rise in life."

"I suppose it is right that everybody should

try to rise in life, as you term it ; but then somebody must fall, or else who would occupy the positions from which others have risen."

"I can only look upon my pupils as being all equal, whatever their parentage may be, as they are all objects of charity."

"I am afraid, then, it is useless for me to ask you to recommend to me two girls of gentle birth, to live in my household."

"I shall be very happy to recommend them to you. Will you look over the list of girls who are leaving this year?"

Miss Harrison produced the list ; there were ten girls ; it is not necessary to give their names, but their positions in life were so various that I must mention them. The callings of their fathers were as follows :—

1. Cowkeeper ; 2. Clergyman ; 3. Letter-carrier ; 4. Master-baker ; 5. Stockbroker ; 6. Publican ; 7. Artist ; 8. Queen's messenger ; 9. Grocer ; 10. Commander R.N.

I am not drawing on my imagination. It is a positive fact that children of all those classes are being educated together in the orphan school, and that the school is supported by voluntary contributions. And I

suppose this sort of thing will go on until the State shall provide for its orphan children.

Lady Waynflete looked puzzled.

"May I see the girls?" she said.

"O, certainly," said Miss Harrison.

"Don't tell them I am married, or anything about me. I daresay they will remember me; and it will be such fun to talk to them merely as an old schoolfellow."

The girls were sent for, and left in a room with Lady Waynflete. They had been little girls when she left the school, so she did not remember much about them, but they knew her. She talked freely with them as an old schoolfellow; asked them all manner of questions about the new house and the improvements; and she was naughty enough to ask them whether they loved Miss Harrison as much as Mrs Mowbray. They were rather divided on this point: one girl's grievance seemed to be that Miss Harrison did not allow dancing because she thought it wrong; whereas in Miss Pinnock's time they often danced, and sometimes had pleasant evenings when Miss Pinnock's friends joined them. On the whole, Lady Waynflete con-

cluded that Miss Harrison was austere, but not severe ; whereas Miss Pinnock was severe, but jolly. Miss Harrison was puritanical and evangelical. She talked sentimentally of the time when she "sat under" dear Mr Smith, and how she missed dear Mr Smith's sermons. The children could not speak of her as anything but kind, because her rule was so mild. She told them that it was better for them not to learn to dance, in case dancing should lead them into evil ways. She considered that she was quite right in this, and said how anxious she was to prepare the children for heaven. Some old people who had been connected with the institution for many years, and who approved Miss Harrison's management, used to nod their heads together, and say how well the children were being prepared for heaven. Perhaps these old people did not look at the other side of the question, namely, that these children having, in the course of nature, sixty or seventy years to live yet, it might be as well to prepare them for living well and happily upon earth. There is a sort of injustice in the justice of these people, and an

unevenness in their equity. Who remembers Drunken Barnaby's account of what he saw at Banbury?—

“In progressu Boreali,
Ut processi ab Australi,
Veni Banbery, O prophanum !
Ubi vidi Puritanum,
Felem facientem furem
Quia Sabbath stravit murem.”

which, for the ladies' sakes, I will translate ; or, rather, give Barnaby's own translation :—

“In my progresse travelling Northward,
Taking my farewell o' th' Southward,
To Banbery came I, O profane one !
Where I saw a Puritane one
Hanging of his cat on Monday
For killing of a mouse on Sunday.”

And I am afraid that the hanging of cats on Monday for killing mice on Sunday is, figuratively speaking, still practised among us.

Lady Waynflete took very little time to decide which girls she would like ; but she found, on questioning one of these girls, that she had relations who intended to provide for her on leaving the school. So she marked in her own mind one other ; but she said nothing to the children about it. When she saw Miss Harrison she told her that,

without inquiring into the parentage of the girls, she had quite decided which she would like to have, but that it would be necessary to find out from the friends of these girls whether they might go to live with her. When she mentioned their names, Miss Harrison did not look quite satisfied. She said that one of those girls, Ada Ward, was very dull, and that she would rather that Lady Waynflete would consider again before choosing, as she could point out to her a girl more deserving of the position. Now, it is the custom, in the particular orphan school of which I am writing, to teach some of the girls what are called accomplishments, namely, to play the piano, and speak French, and do a little drawing, &c. The others receive what is called only a plain education. I cannot, for my own part, see that the mere fingering of the piano is an accomplishment. Out of every twenty girls who learn to play the piano, not more than one has a taste for music; and yet a girl is not considered to be properly educated unless she can play on that instrument. So she spends some hours a day for several years in learning to do so, and is only an

indifferent performer at the end of the time, whereas the same time spent upon English literature would give her a liberal education. Ada Ward was one of the girls who had been only plainly educated. She had no relations to promise to provide for her when she should leave the school; and Miss Harrison had intended finding a situation for her of much the same sort as she had found for Myfanwy. She was a quiet gentle girl, quite undeveloped. In a few years she will be perhaps a charming clever woman. Those precocious children, who are so clever at fourteen or fifteen years old, are seldom worth much at twenty. The girls and boys who were so clever at school generally turn out dull men and women; whereas the clever men and women were seldom remarkable at school, except perhaps for their dulness. Miss Harrison urged Lady Waynflete to see two other girls whom she should choose.

Lady Waynflete assented. The first girl came. She was rather short and broad, and her movements were wooden. Miss Harrison said she was a clever girl, and had raised herself to the head of the school. She was remarkably clever in arithmetic.

"Can she do needlework well," said Lady Waynflete.

"We do not consider needlework as a part of the education of the girls who are trained to be governesses. They have no time for it."

"I really think it is most important that women should be able to do needlework well, and I would prefer to choose girls who could work."

"I am only anxious that you should have our best girls, Lady Waynflete, but of course, if you prefer the inferior ones, I cannot help it. You can go," she said to the girl, "and send Sarah Davy to me."

"I am sure the girl who has just left is of inferior birth," said Lady Waynflete, "although she is so clever."

"She is the daughter of a respectable tradesman, and I am sure she will make an excellent governess, she is so conscientious."

"There is something so harsh in her movements and manner and voice, that she would be a perfect nuisance in a house. And yet she is so anxious to please. Her very

anxiety to please would bore one. Nothing would ever make that girl a lady. She will be simply an object of pity if she goes into society. She would have been much happier in her original position in life. Who will tolerate her?"

"I really cannot see the awkwardness you mention, Lady Waynflete. She is a good clever girl, and deserves a good situation. Here is Sarah Davy; perhaps you will be better pleased with her."

Sarah was a tall girl. Lady Waynflete had remembered her as a charming little thing with rosy cheeks. She had nice manners, and was said to be clever; but Lady Waynflete, in questioning her, soon found out that she was one of those pretty little machines who would do all she was told, and learn all she was told, but had no originality. "Girls like that are always such prigs," said Lady Waynflete to herself. She would not have said it aloud for fear of shocking Miss Harrison, who was rather fond of prigs. So I think was Miss Pinnock, or rather Mrs Mowbray; and it occurred to Lady Waynflete that Sarah Davy would be just the girl to

suit Mrs Mowbray, if she should imitate the Marchioness and herself in having waiting gentlewomen.

“ I think, Miss Harrison, I cannot do better than keep to my original choice,” said Lady Waynflete. “ And perhaps you will be kind enough to inquire of the friends of the girls whether there is any objection to their coming to me. Will you tell me the parentage of the two girls, although it will not alter my decision, for they are ladies in heart and soul, I am sure ? ”

“ Ada Ward is the daughter of an artist, and Caroline Ross is the daughter of a naval captain.”

“ May I just see them for a few minutes before I go, and may I mention what I intend to do with them ? ”

“ O, certainly.”

Lady Waynflete told Ada and Caroline why she had come to see them, and what she wished them to do, and asked them whether they would like to come to her. The girls almost cried with delight. Ada had been taught by Miss Harrison to expect servitude, and Caroline had been told that

arrangements were being made for her to be a pupil teacher, or governess pupil, or whatever it is called, in a private school.

When bedtime came that evening, and the girls went up to their big comfortless dormitories with the glaring whitewashed walls, there were two amongst them who went to bed with happy hearts. The excitement kept them awake for some time. They pictured to themselves all sorts of enjoyments. They wondered how they would be dressed? Women have all, I suppose, a touch of vanity: the woman who has not is generally a slattern. And these children, after wearing gowns of the same colour and material both winter and summer for eight years, were naturally anxious to see themselves in something of a different colour and make. That they would have any duties to perform did not occur to them then, though it may have after in their more sober moments. They had a vision of a world of pleasure and sunshine, and forgot the rainy days and days of trouble of which one seems to have so many when youth has gone.

“ This is the first time I have seen the new

building," said Lady Waynflete; "it is a great improvement on the old. You must have been glad to leave that dingy old place and come here."

"Yes; this is a pleasant change, but I am about to resign my post here."

"Indeed! I fancied you would remain here some time, and would then make a brilliant match, like your predecessor. But perhaps you are going to be married?"

"No; I am not so fortunate as Mrs Mowbray. I have sent in my resignation on the plea of being out of health."

"But you don't appear to be ill."

"No; I may not, but I am much worried. I have never been the *real* mistress here; I have been subject to constant interference."

"I suppose Mrs Mowbray takes too *decided* an interest in the school?"

"Yes she does."

"Ah!" thought Lady Waynflete, as she went home, "that's what I expected. Mrs Mowbray will never let any mistress be there long while she interferes. I wonder what those two girls will be like? Will they be as much astonished at the world as I was when I

left the school, and will they be as delighted to escape from their prison? I must not give them too much liberty at first, for fear I should spoil them. But I shall be so delighted to see them enjoying their freedom, that I am afraid I may give them too much. I hope they will be good girls. They look good."

"And where are your little girls?" said Lord Beechampton, at dinner. "I should like to see them."

"O, I have not got them yet; you are in such a hurry. I may not have them for some weeks."

"I hope you will have them in time to bring them to Beechampton at Christmas. If all you ladies are going to set up maids of honour, I must keep apartments in the Castle for their reception. I expect Ella will be too lazy to take care of any girls. She will be leaving them too much alone, and they will get into mischief."

"Lady Tixover has some energy when she chooses."

"Yes; she was a most indefatigable nurse when I was ill."

“By this time she is on her way to the Azores.”

“Yes; I hope that mad husband of hers will settle down next year.”

CHAPTER XV.

BACK TO THE AZORES.

“When once we leave the shore, my love,
When once we touch the sea ;
Then you and I are one, my love,
And you and I are free.”

“ANOTHER honeymoon,” said Tix to Ella, as they ascended the deck of the *Palinoura* in search of the Troglodyte.

“Twenty more honeymoons if you like, my dear Tix,” replied Ella. “I am not in the least tired of you, and yet I get so tired of most other people.”

“So do I,” said the Viscount.

“Whom do you get tired of?” asked Ella.

“Well, everybody but you.”

“Flatterer!”

"Not in the least. Now, let me tell you what I mean. Wilde, bring some biscuits and champagne. I am, and always have been, the most restless man in the world. Wherever I go I am sure to encounter an adventure. That's why I get tired of most people and most places, even though the people are charming and the places unique in their loveliness."

"Dear me!" said Ella, comfortably arranged among her rugs, "when are you going to get tired of *me*?"

"Never, child—we suit. I am *energy*—you are *repose*. I could live with you a thousand thousand years, and not get tired. Yet I tire of several of our good friends. I tire of dear Doctor Tachbrook, wise as he is. I tire of O. O., adventurous as he is; I tire of Tom Jones, jolly as he is."

"O, never mind that. Do you tire of the girls? If so, why?"

"Because not one of them is Ella Tix, my lazy Irish lass. You are just what I wanted, my pet; and it is such a pleasure to get you all to myself on board the *Palinoura*. To race through the sea under the moonlight

with you is perfectly delicious. I am swift—you are calm: we suit each other exactly.”

“I am glad you think so,” said Ella. “If you are quite sure, I am *very* happy. But I *do* like to take life easily, Tix; so, if you take me rapidly through the world, you must be sure there are plenty of cushions.”

Tix and Ella made love most deliciously on the stern-deck of the *Palinoura*, as it flashed swiftly through the sea toward the Island of Hawks. Swiftly flew the famous yacht; did it not? Happy days had they together; happy weather. Brilliant he and she serene; king and queen. In fact, they twain had never enjoyed anything so absolutely as this pleasant voyage together, quite apart from the rest of the world. Each learnt from the other. Tix knew well that Ella's loveliness of repose was what he wanted as complement to his own insatiable energy. Ella, though with plenty of fun in her, had not heretofore learnt the value of Tix's wonderful thirst for all things new. As the *Palinoura* steamed through the moonlight, crushing corpuscles of light from a

phosphorescent sea, these two learnt why they loved each other.

"I love you, Ella," said Tix, "because you are so amazingly lazy."

"Yes, I think I am rather lazy," she replied. "Still, I am not too lazy to love you. And I think I love you because you are not so lazy as I am, and because it is so deliciously easy to say *Tix*."

"Well, it certainly does *not* take long," he rejoined.

"You see," said Ella, as they sat together under the moon, and could see the steersman's hands under the bright light as he turned the wheel and watched the compass, "I come of quite a fiery race. And I am fiery enough myself, if you will only try me."

"I won't try you," said the Viscount. "I think I can easily keep my little wife in order, even though there *is* Irish blood in her. You shall always have your own way, Ella, my pet, except when I happen to want mine."

"Thank you for nothing," says Ella; "I mean to have my own way always. You couldn't go against a lazy child like me,

except by personal assault ; and if you personally assault me I shall"—

"What shall you do?"

"Say, '*Please don't*;' or, '*Please do*;' whichever you like."

"You're the loveliest child in Europe," quoth Tix.

"*Are* we in Europe just now?" asked Ella ; for the swift *Palinoura* was just running under a full moon into the harbour of the Island of Hawks.

"The Troglodyte is gone to bed, I guess," said Tix, when about midnight, in broad moonlight, they were landed on the island. "We shall have to wake him up in that wonderful cavern of his. How about passing that bridge of rope?"

"Dangerous by moonlight," replied the Viscountess. "I'll try if you're afraid."

"Do I look afraid, you rogue? It is an easy leap by daylight."

This confabulation between husband and wife, who seem to have been unusually in love with each other considering the relations between them, occurred as they passed through the pleasant vineyard above the lake

whereon opened the Troglodyte's cavern. In that solitary island late hours are unknown. Two or three sailors, whom Tix had taken with him in case of accident, made a frightful shouting at the mouth of the cavern. They were soon answered by some of the Troglodyte's adherents, who came forward in a state of semi-nudity, and asked what was the matter. Tix's well-known voice made matters intelligible at once. They shoved a plank across the ravine, and lighted torches in the cavern, and brought down the Troglodyte.

"Horrid shame to wake you up at midnight, old fellow," said Tix. "Nights get cold in a cavern, I guess. Never mind ; here we are, and here's the *Palinoura*, and I'm going to take you to England for Christmas. Meanwhile, are there any crater-fish to fry for supper ? and where's Mrs Margaret ?"

Mrs Margaret Tachbrook, born Delisle, came down from her cavernous bed-chamber with modest yet scanty clothing. It was, one may say, a shift ; or, perhaps, a make-shift. Your islanders of the Azores cannot have all the perfections of Piccadilly. She

looked pretty ; she did not blush ; why blush about a night-dress in a desert island ? Adam and Eve descended not ; tired out, they were far too fast asleep to be awoken even by unusual noise.

Tix and his wife got supper and a bed. This was just what Tix liked. To eat strange food in a cavern, how he enjoyed it ! To criticise fish and goat's flesh unknown in London, how he enjoyed it ! To sleep on a heap of mattresses in a cavern with the moon looking through the unglazed natural window, how he enjoyed it ! In fact, few things there were that Tix would not enjoy.

And Ella quite agreed with him, different as they were. Different, yet how similar ! Tix was actively enjoyative : Ella, passively. Tix wanted an adventure : Ella wanted a lounging-chair. They suited each other, as the positive and negative poles of a galvanic battery suit each other. Theirs was a marriage of completion.

That the restless Tix should suit the reposeful Ella appeared to me remarkable, until I discovered that in Tix there is an element of repose, and in Ella an element of

restlessness. For dear old Tix, while he seeks adventure, is perpetually dreaming of a delicious quietude; while Ella, lazily lounging on the lawn, is perpetually thinking of possible adventure.

It was amusing to awake the next morning with the sun shining upon them through God's own window. Tix was delighted: Ella was perplexed. She had got used to the *Palinoura*, but this cavern was rather too much for her. However, she took things kindly, being indeed of a wisely liberal disposition; and when she found that the brisk fresh island air made her husband sleepier than usual, she merely treated him as a well instructed wife would treat her husband under such conditions. This may be left to my lady readers: those, at least, who are married. I am most anxious to be criticised by married ladies. They are my favourite audience.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TROGLODYTE'S RETURN.

“Darling of islands, far away from telegrams,
Where the soft breezes whisper in the eventide ;
How much more pleasant thou than Piccadilly art !
Yet Piccadilly is not so volcanic, quite.”

ROSILY lay the faint remembrances of dawn upon the lake when Tix descended to bathe. It was enjoyable. Still was the lake, save where the stream came headlong into it. Adam and Eve, early risers, were away in the very middle of the lucid water—visible as Orion to Artemis, on the fatal day when Apollo hoaxed her. The Troglodyte was lounging up and down, smoking serenely.

“This is pleasant,” said Tix ; “you will be quite sorry to leave. Still this charming island will be rather chilly at Christmas, and

Beechampton Castle is snugger than your cavern."

"Winter is not so very bad here," said Gilbert Tachbrook ; "and, thanks to your lovely yacht, I get plenty of supplies from the inhabited islands ; but there are three reasons why I think I shall settle in England now."

"Three?"

"Yes. One, I regret to tell you, is that my wife is getting tired. She has tamed Adam and Eve, though, as you see, she still allows them to swim ; but she wants new worlds to conquer. She can't take life lazily, as I do."

"Neither can I, as my wife does. I am always wanting something fresh in the way of adventure. I consider a day lost when something startling has not happened. Something will happen while I am here, depend on it. But what's your second reason for going home?"

"Why, the Terceira and St Michael's people are beginning to find out that this island is worth visiting, perhaps inhabiting. They come over on picnics—dirty languid

women, who can hardly walk a mile, and who treat their servants like slaves. They wanted to explore my cavern, but Tom Marsden was on guard, and he threw the leader of the party over head and heels into the lake. It was great fun, they say. The fellow couldn't swim a stroke, and Tom fished him out again. From what I hear, some of them are coming to settle here; and, as I can't turn them out, I suppose I must turn out myself. That's reason No. 2."

"And the third?"

"Ah, about the third I may be wrong, but I don't think I am. The lake here is the crater of a submarine volcano. Indeed, the island, like several others in the group, was thrown up by volcanic agency, and I expect will disappear in just the same way. There recently have been curious disturbances in the lake, as if the forces were working faster. Look!"

Tixover looked. The lake had been deliciously calm. It was a sheet of silver, with golden lights on it, and purple shadows. At that moment the water rose in the centre of the lake like the bore on the Severn. Adam

and Eve had luckily reached the shore, or they might have been submerged in an instant by the rapid movement of the wave. Presently a dark thunderous cloud came across, and a column of water fell from it, and a column of water rose from the lake to meet it. All but this fragment of terrible black, pouring down a rage of water, the sky was as blue as a dog-violet. When the attraction of cloud and lake had become complete in result, the waterspout, a thing of utter loveliness, seemed to glide along the surface of the water, threatening sudden collapse.

"That is very beautiful," said Tixover, "but rather dangerous. We'll disperse it." He took from his pocket a revolver and fired all six barrels into the watery phantom. It was at once changed into a rain-storm, and they both got pretty wet.

"That is the strongest symptom of disturbance I have yet seen," said the Troglo-dyte. "What do you think of it?"

"I simply think that I shall leave the island to-day, and I advise you to do likewise. Send your traps on board the lesser *Palinoura*; give your men the route. You

and Mrs Tachbrook may as well come with me ; I travel faster."

"Agreed !" said Tachbrook. "Margaret will be glad to go. She wants something to do. I never wanted anything to do myself, so I have some difficulty in sympathising with her. I suppose it is better to be submerged by an English mob than by an Azorean waterspout."

Everybody knows that Tix is prompt. Both *Palinouras* were ready to steam off that afternoon. When he had given his orders, Ella and he went northward for a stroll. There the cliffs give a noble view of the larger islands. The sea was sapphire, and the sky amethyst, and the islands blocks of porphyry.

"This is lovely," said Ella, sitting on virgin turf. "Why can't one always be beyond the reach of postmen and newspapers ? What a delight to be alone in such an island as this !"

"I agree with you, my own," said Tix, "yet I'm going to take you away to-day. This island is as fallacious as *Σχερίη*, which seems never to have been seen since the greatest of all wanderers saw it."

“What *do* you mean?”

“Why that it was thrown up by a volcano under the sea, and is likely to vanish again some day ; and it looks very likely that it will vanish soon. So, as I don’t want to go into the next world in a hurry, I mean to take the *Palinoura* off this afternoon. Do you object?”

“I fear it would be no good, you’re such a tyrant.”

“Am I? But what is that? There’s an army of invaders.”

Ella looked towards the coast, and beheld a lot of people landing on the shore from a cutter. They were lazy-looking women and even lazier-looking men—people who seemed brought up to eat, drink—never think. The women lounged, the men smoked.

“Time for us to go away,” said the Viscount. “These people have discovered this island, and will be building villas soon. Come, my Ella, let us go and see if Tachbrook has packed up.”

He went back to the cavern, and reported the fresh arrival.

“Yes,” said the Troglodyte ; “that’s the

way I'm getting treated. Quite time to go back to England, specially as my wife wants to go."

"You'll enjoy Christmas at Beechampton Castle," said Ella, who knew Beechampton Castle well. The noble old place had resumed its mediæval life and beauty under the present Earl.

The two *Palinouras* were ordered out at noon. Everybody went on board the larger yacht in what Tix called his phaselus, a pin-nace built on lines of his own, and much resembling a bean. The Troglodyte's cavern furniture was put on board the lesser yacht. Nobody was on board at the last moment except Jack Marsden, who had everything in charge; the other sailors had come to receive orders from Tix.

It was a full moon. Suddenly, through the glorious lucidity of the sky, a crimson meteor shot, and dropt a shower of radiant rain. It was followed by a hundred others. Then the sea heaved—a heavy heave, as if in labour with a new god. Then——

Luckily the greater *Palinoura* was well out at sea, and her captain knew his business,

else may it be feared that this story must have been mulcted of several of its characters.

For there was a hideous whirlpool. The Island of Hawks went down into the sea. Nothing save the *Palinoura's* singular swiftness could have saved her. She steamed out of the tremendous eddy at the highest pressure of her engines, churning the sea into wondrous whiteness, and only just escaping the mad maelstrom.

The island was gone.

"I wonder," said Tix, a man so cool amid his restlessness that the collapse of the solar system would not move him, "what has become of poor Marsden? He can swim, I know. The poor old *Palinoura's* gone; but Jack may have kept himself afloat on a spar. We can run back, Lester, when the eddy is over."

"I'll turn her, my Lord, the minute it's safe," said Captain Lester. He had been a lieutenant in the navy, and was an uncommonly good seaman. It was the first time he had known an island disappear.

The *Palinoura* went back when the mad

eddy of water was over. The island was gone, and the lesser *Palinoura* with all the Troglodyte's furniture was gone. I suppose the ladies and gentlemen from Terceira or St Michael's were gone also. But——

A *but* most valuable. Jack Marsden had stuck to a spar, and was got on board, and dosed with brandy till he felt all right again.

“It's all very fine to drown an island,” said Jack, when he woke up. “A British seaman is under orders not to be drowned. What would my wives say if I deserted them all?”

Jack had a wife in every port. The British seaman is polygamous.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ADVENTURE AT FALMOUTH.

“ I love the Grecian sapphire seas ;
I love the sprinkled Sporades :
The sun 's a power, the sky 's a prism,
And nobody has rheumatism.”

“ I DON'T mean to return to England at once,” said the Viscount, when he found his crew all safe. “ I wonder whether those unlucky people who invaded the island got swallowed up.”

“ It would serve them right,” said the Troglodyte.

“ I suppose it would, but I dare say you would have rushed to save them. But now, what shall we do with ourselves for a week or two ? Where shall I take the *Palinoura* ? ”

“ You said,” replied the Troglodyte, “ that

you were not going to England. Change your mind. England is an island worth periplus. Try the coast of Devon. See if the *Palinoura* will push her way up the Severn. Steam right away to the Orkneys and Hebrides."

"I think not," replied Tix. "Those localities sound slow. Suppose we try Iceland?"

"Ah," said the Troglodyte, "I think I should like Iceland, if there were time. I like their language."

"Do you know it?"

"The alphabet."

"And what else do you like?"

"Why, their charming custom of sending the young maidens of the household to undress you and put you to bed. That absolute innocence is lovely. An English gentleman, such as I hope most of our remote travellers are, would accept such service thankfully and unsalaciously. The English cad is not likely to reach Iceland."

"The English cad is the worst of cads," said Tixover. "*Corruptio optimi pessima.*"

After all, Tixover altered his mind, and steamed straight back to England; for the

idea occurred to him that if telegraphic news reached the papers of the submergence of the Isle of Hawks, and the loss of the lesser *Palinoura*, everybody would imagine a terrible tragedy. So he changed his intention, and ran into that great harbour of the future which lies beneath Pendennis Castle. Thence he telegraphed to Rothescamp of their return.

They went to the Green Bank Hotel, and were delighted to find sea-kale with their roast fowls, and to get an early brace of woodcocks and a bottle of old port. After dinner, the youngsters being sent to bed, Ella and Mrs Tachbrook confabulated, while Tix and the Troglodyte went down to the billiard-room.

"There's magic in the moonlight to-night," said Tix, as, walking down the corridor, they caught it on the sea. "I shall have an adventure."

"What an odd fellow you are, Tixover!"

"I suppose I am, but I always know. Call me odd, if you like. I have an instinct which invariably leads me to places where there is some adventure to be found. Come, Tachbrook, I'll bet you any present you like

to give Ella, against anything I'll give your wife, that something will happen to-night."

"O, but you are resolved it shall."

"Not at all. You and I are going into a billiard-room in a very quiet country hotel. I am not resolved, but I am, in some curious way, forewarned. Will you bet?"

"Of course I will. That's the sort of bet I like. If I win, as probably I shall, you must tell me what to give your wife: if you win, I will tell you what to give mine."

When they arrived at the billiard-room, it was found that they were just going to play pool. Sixpenny sides—not extravagant. Of course the Viscount and Tachbrook knew nobody; there was one man, however, who attracted the attention of both—a man of middle height, olive complexion, attenuate hands, beard as black as midnight. He was in faultless evening dress, with a hothouse flower in his buttonhole.

"There's my adventure," whispered Tix to the Troglodyte. "I told you so."

Pool was played. Major Stockmeyer, as this gentleman was named, played well. Tix played better. Tix plays all games too well

for most opponents. He carried off the pool.

The olive-tinctured Major had ordered for himself some kidneys, to be brought in when the game was over. He sat down rather surly. He had been the best billiard-player in Falmouth for some time. He ate his meal churlishly. By and by he said—

“Will you have a game with me, sir—A hundred up?”

“With pleasure,” said Tixover. “I am very fond of billiards for a change. I have not touched a cue for ten years till to-night.”

He touched his cue that night to some purpose, beginning with an easy break of seventy. Major Stockmeyer piously ejaculated. He had never known an amateur play so well.

The olive Major, a bird of prey, with the adunc nose of the vulture, could not give up the idea of extracting something from the Viscount by some process or another. He proposed *écarté*. To the surprise of the Troglodyte, who knew that Tix hated such methods of wasting time, he assented, simply saying—

“ I will join you again in five minutes.”

Those five minutes were employed in a matter of business. When he returned, they sat down to *écarté* for a while. Stockmeyer was evidently in luck : he turned the king with miraculous certainty. Tix, with angelic patience, threw away upon him several sovereigns : suddenly he said—

“ You are fortunate in your kings, Major Stockmeyer.”

“ What do you mean, sir ? ” said the Major, fiercely, his black moustache bristling as he spoke. “ Is that an insinuation ? ”

“ Not in the least,” replied Tix. “ I never insinuate. I always assert. Your method of playing *écarté* is not mine, that is all.”

“ No, that is not all,” retorted the Major, livid with anger. “ You will fight me.”

“ Pooh ! ” said Tix. “ Fight *you* ! Fight a man who calls himself a major, and is merely a cardsharp ! The moment I saw you I thought I remembered you : your subsequent conduct has shown me I was right. I seldom forget any one I have once seen ; and you I have seen twice before.”

The Major looked perplexed. His air of defiance passed off.

“What do you mean?” he said.

“This is the third time I have seen you. On the first occasion, you were behind a counter, in the Strand: you have perhaps forgotten that you purloined your master’s money. I had an account with him. You coolly used my cheques when they arrived. The result was hard labour. You ought to have been well flogged, but the law spares the skin of scoundrels.”

Stockmeyer completely collapsed.

“You have disguised yourself remarkably well,” said Tix, “and would make a very good actor in a farce that might be called ‘Shopman turned Soldier.’ But do you remember my meeting you a second time?”

“Yes, my Lord, I remember you now.”

“And I suppose you remember Hetty Laurence, whom you promised to marry. Why did you not fulfil your promise?”

“I loved her very much,” said the pseudo Major.

“No doubt—for which reason you left her to starve! I did not love the little fool in the

least ; but as she was born upon my estate, I had her saved from starvation. She and her child are still at Tixover. Would it not be as well for you to give up cardsharping and other forms of swindling, and go home and marry her ? Your father was a respectable hedger and ditcher : will you go and be honest ? I know it is hard for a man who has once taken to roguery to be honest, but honesty is pleasanter in the long run."

" I will do what you tell me, Lord Tixover ; I am ashamed of myself."

" Don't be ashamed of yourself : be ashamed of your follies and crimes. Go and marry that poor pretty little girl whom you seduced and deserted. I will give you employment : go off at once, and I will send a letter to my steward on the matter. I am sending one of my own to Tixover to-morrow."

Tix was pleased to find this fellow—whose true name was Stockmer, but who had inserted letters to make himself foreign and picturesque—willing to obey orders. Tix had gone out to secure the aid of a policeman, in case the self-styled Major should recalcitrate. The Major was submissive : the policeman got his beer.

"I have had a little adventure to night," said Tix to Ella, when he rejoined her.

"Dear boy ! the air is full of adventures for you. You make them, as the priests make miracles."

"I think I do. By the way, we must travel to-morrow. I want to be at Rothescamp when Harold marries that little rascal Seroza, and it will be coming off soon. Think of something to give them. I'll give Harold a flock of South Downs, and Seroza a girdle of pearls. Will that do?"

"You never give *me* such things," she said.

"Why, you may have as much mutton and as many pearls as you like," replied Tixover.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INJUSTA NOVERCA.

"Bisque die numerant ambo pecus, alter et haedos."

"IN asking you to join our Christmas party at Beechampton, it will be necessary to include that pretty little lady also, I suppose, as she will then be your wife," Lord Beechampton had said to Harold before he left Rothescamp.

"Yes; we shall be married next month. We are only waiting for my cousin Gilbert to come home from his cavernous palace in the Azores. And we must have Lord Tixover at the wedding, to give Seroza away, as she is one of the distressed damsels whom he has rescued."

Harold was determined that his wedding

should be an original one. He had taken great interest in the welfare of the Rothescamp people ever since he came home, and he still did more on Tom's estate than Tom Jones himself. The tenantry all acknowledged Sir Harold as their landlord, but *Master* Harold, as they called the Doctor's son, was really the great man to them. They had so long looked upon the Doctor as the representative of the Tachbrook family, that his son seemed to them of more importance than the real baronet, a young man of whose existence they had only lately known. So the wedding-day was to be a great day in Rothescamp. It was to be at Tom's house, as the big hall would hold so many people. Tom and Miranda were making preparations ; so also were the Rothescamp people. Harold was anxious that in all the preparation only Rothescamp people should be employed, as far as they could be. We know that a young lady considers it necessary to have a great many garments made before she is married. Miranda undertook to supply Seroza with these garments, and Rothescamp girls were employed to make them. How they

chattered over them, and thought how fortunate the lady that was to wear them would be in having Master Harold for a husband. Harold wished Seroza to have twelve bridesmaids chosen from the girls of the village. They were to be girls of good character under the age of twenty-one. Miranda, who had much taste, found great amusement in designing appropriate rustic dresses for these girls. Harold wished no expense to be spared, and there was plenty of work to do. Many a poor family was enabled to lay by a little sum of money before the winter commenced. Sir Harold's tenantry were to be feasted in the big hall, and each person was to receive a present. Some cottagers who were on outlying property in whom Harold was interested were to have a dinner at the "Tachbrook Arms," and a present afterwards. Winter with the labouring classes is generally a dreary time. The father is often out of work, and there is no longer any work for the children to do in the fields. Less money is earned than in the summer, but more food is wanted. The great difficulty is fuel and shoe-leather. The careful and provident

person who never knew want will say that the labourer can make something extra in harvest-time. So he can. But if he has a family there is generally a winter's debt to pay. The village shopwoman (one never hears of a village shop-man), if she is kind-hearted, will give credit to the poor fellow under distressing circumstances. A little girl goes into her shop, and says "Mother's ill, and there's a new baby, and father's out of work, and says will you let him have something for mother, and he will pay you when he gets some work?" But when the man gets work, he can only make sufficient money for his family just to live, and so he can't pay his debt until harvest-time. Or sometimes an industrious mother will come in and say, "John's shoes are quite worn out, and I have only part of the money towards a new pair, may I pay the rest by instalments of sixpence a week?" And before John's shoes are quite paid for, Sarah's are worn out, and then credit is wanted again. I know a generous village shopwoman, who, if she had been hard-hearted, might have made her fortune before now, for she has had her shop for

nearly thirty years. But she gives the poor people credit, and has so many bad debts, that she will most likely die insolvent. If I were a rich man, I would pay up the debts, on condition that she gave no more credit, as I am sure it does harm in the end. But she is so soft-hearted that I don't believe she would accept my condition, and there is no fear of my being rich, as the public don't like my novels.

Now when the labouring classes of a neighbourhood have a kind and just landlord, they are sure to be in good condition. More especially so when there are no tract-distributing ladies to interfere. Those ladies who distribute tracts and beef-tea and wine and soup indiscriminately (all sometimes of a questionable character, including the tracts), do a great deal of harm. Indiscriminate charity is the parent of pauperism.

The people of Rothescamp having a good landlord are not likely to be in absolute want; but the winter of which we are writing will be to them an unusually good one. They will be able to make merry at Christmas, and put a few extra plums in their Christmas-

pudding. For Harold is determined that his wedding shall be of use to them, and shall be remembered by them.

Tix is going to lend Harold and Miranda-Tixover Hall for their honeymoon. They are to remain there a few days alone, and then Tix and Ella will join them, with Gilbert and Margaret Tachbrook.

"I'm never at home," Tix had said, "so you might as well go to my place."

"But we should like you to be there too."

"O, we'll come in a few days after you, when you will be getting tired of each other, and will be thankful for a friend, or even an enemy; and I shall bring Gilbert and Margaret with me, as they have never yet seen my place."

During all this time pretty Seroza often thought how fortunate she was, and how she wished her father could have seen her now. She sometimes wondered where her step-father was, and whether he was treating that poor girl well. She always shuddered when she thought of him, and wished she were near Harold; for she had a feeling of fear

when she remembered that dreadful day on the island. She thought she would be quite safe when she was married to Harold. Harold was such a manly fellow that any girl would feel safe with him.

Miranda often joked Seroza about their relationship. She would call her "Mamma," and ask her if she was going to be very strict.

"What relation will our children be?" asked Miranda.

"It may be all very well for you to ask that question," said Seroza, "but I'm not married yet."

"What fun it will be if I have a little brother!" said Miranda.

"And what fun it will be if I have a step-grandson!" said Seroza. "Fancy being a grandmother at one-and-twenty! How dignified I shall feel! I hope you will teach my grandson to behave respectfully to me."

"Wait till you have one, miss."

"You may call me *miss* to-day, if you like; but you will soon have to call me *mamma*, and make a curtsey when you speak to me."

“ You little minx ! ” said Miranda, and slapped her rotund shoulder.

“ Oh ! ” ejaculated Seroza, “ what a dreadful breach of the fifth or sixth commandment—I forget which.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATH.

“City on the sinuous Avon,
Tranquil town, from tumult free ;
Memory, poetic artist,
Loves to picture thee.
Idly haunting crag and headland,
While I ponder careless rhymes,
Comes a weird and wandering echo
Of the abbey chimes.”

“THE BATH” is the true name of that crescent city of romance and fashion which is now vulgarly denominated *Bath*. What a gallery of brilliant pictures its unique history suggests! Leprous Prince Bladud, herding his pigs a thousand years ago, is in curious contrast with Beau Nash driving his coach-and-six, and ruling the revels like a Napoleon of folly. Then was Anstey laureate of the thermal city, and wrote—

“’Twas a glorious sight to behold the fair sex
All wading with gentlemen up to their necks.”

Greater men than either Nash or Anstey have loved The Bath. Is not that Harry Fielding lounging across the Abbey Square, pondering "Tom Jones," and waiting till his friend Squire Allworthy has ended his business at the post-office, to go back and dine at Prior Park ? Surely that grand gentleman in the chariot-and-four is the great Earl of Chatham, that "terrible cornet of horse," coming to see if Bath waters will mitigate his gout. That jolly schoolboy, who is the hero of football at the grammar-school, is named Smith ; he will foil "the meanest man of men" at Acre one of these fine days. That elderly gentleman on horseback, with a groom behind him carrying a bag of coppers for the mendicants, and mounting his master's horse to keep the saddle warm while his master pays a visit, is he who wrote "Vathek" at a sitting, built palaces and let them perish ; who keeps agents in every city in the world to purchase rarities ; who has breakfast served on a new set of porcelain daily, each set worth its weight in gold, and who cannot believe in a God. Shall we go to a hell in Pulteney Street ? Perhaps Sheridan will be there, losing guineas and making jokes :

“Good at a fight, but better at a play ;
Godlike in giving, but the devil to pay.”

Shall we saunter among swells in Milsom Street ? Why, there is Sir Antony Absolute cursing his son and his gout, and Lydia Languish going to the library for a new novel, and Sir Lucius O'Trigger hastening to put courage into the body of Bob Acres. And look at that stout slovenly-looking woman leaning back lazily in her coach. It is Mrs Malaprop, celebrated for her “nice derangement of epitaphs.” I think there must be a lineal descendant of Mrs Malaprop in the little town of Maidenhead, for a few weeks ago I read in a penny newspaper issued in that town, that one of the town-councillors objected to such “opprobrious epitaphs” being applied to him. This was too tempting for a wicked wit of the neighbourhood, who immediately wrote an “opprobrious epitaph” on the unlucky town-councillor, and published it in the papers. Up the hill towards Prior Park, look at that noble old man of ninety racing with a girl of six or seven.

“Rosina ran down Prior Park,
Joyous and buoyant as a lark.

The little girl, light-heeled, light-hearted,
Challenged me, and away we started."

That is Walter Landor, and we can hear the
child tell her mamma—

"You cannot think how fast he ran,
For such a very old, old man."

The journey from Falmouth to Rothescamp being a long one, Tix, as leader of the expedition, decided to break it at the Bath. They drove to the "York House," an hostelry so celebrated that I have known Jenny Lind unable to get a bed there. However, on this occasion the six travellers were fortunate, and obtained ample accommodation, and, it is not necessary to say, excellent fare.

Tix chose The Bath as a halting-place, because Hugh Thurston was there with a clergyman who was coaching him, so that he should not be entirely ignorant when he went to Oxford. He had had so little opportunity of learning anything before, either with his tutor or with old Leaker, that he was shy of going amongst other men at Oxford. So he was to remain at Bath with the Rev. Robert Woodford until Christmas, when he was to join Lord Tixover at

Beechampton. He had been only a few weeks with Mr Woodford, but he had already done much. When Tix arrived at his hotel, he sent a message to Hugh to say that he should like to see him to lunch the next day at one o'clock.

"I *must* have an adventure," said Tix after dinner. "A city without an adventure is as bad as a city without a minster. Will you come out and smoke a cigar with me, Tachbrook?"

"You really are incorrigible," said Ella. "What can possibly happen in Bath? It is *such* a dull place. Don't bring home any more distressed damsels."

"Adventures happen in the dullest places," Tix replied. "I haven't been in Bath for no end of years, and I want to see it by moonlight."

The result of course was, that Tix and the Trogoldyte went off to saunter through the thermal city.

"You ought to have lived in the Middle Ages," said Tachbrook to Tixover, as they walked down the hill. "You are such an odd mixture of Don Quixote and Walter of the Bird Meadow."

"You do not quite accurately judge my character. I am not a mixture. I am the same all through, and the poetry in me, such as there is, belongs to the spirit of adventure in me ; but what I find people cannot believe is, that there is also a magnetic influence which I feel when I am wanted anywhere. Now, to-night I would rather have stayed at home, and drunk another bottle of that capital Lafitte, and had a pleasant confabulation with you and Margaret and Ella and those wonderful wild children of yours ; but I feel, by a kind of magnetic attraction, that there is something for me to do, and I have come out to do it."

"You are rather mad, old fellow," said Gilbert Tachbrook.

"Of course I am. So is anybody who has brains. The point wherein I differ from most mild madmen is that I don't wish to be sane."

"Which may be very pleasant for yourself," said Gilbert ; "but may sometimes be inconvenient to others. You have a wife now, and you should settle down and give up your adventures."

"But Ella enjoys my adventures."

"She may for a time, but you will soon have more distressed damsels on your hands than you know what to do with—not to mention youths."

"O, I'll marry them all," said Tix.

"Then there is just the possibility that you may have a family of your own soon. I am no longer young, Tix; I have had my mad time; and now I wish you would let me advise you. Settle down on your estate and look after your tenants. Take your seat in the House, and do all the good you can there. If you want still to rescue distressed damsels, send an agent about the country to do it for you."

"No one else will ever scent out adventure as I do. It comes to me. I know I shall have an adventure before I leave Bath, although you want to persuade me to go home quietly to-night."

They went back to the hotel without adventure, and Hugh Thurston came to lunch the next morning. He was glad to see Lady Tixover, who chaffed him about Myfanwy.

"I dare say you have forgotten her by this time, Hugh, and have seen half a dozen pretty girls since, and don't know which you are most in love with."

"No; I have not seen any lady except one who is in the same house—Mr Woodford's daughter," said Hugh, blushing.

"O," said Tix, "there's something up. Hugh is blushing. He's fallen in love again."

"Indeed, my Lord, I have not."

"Then what is the matter, Hugh?"

"I don't quite know how to describe it; but I think the lady likes me a little."

"Why, Hugh, you are getting quite vain," said Ella. "How do you know the lady likes you? Has she told you so? Has she taken advantage of leap-year and made you an offer? Do you know that by the common law of England a man cannot refuse a lady who makes him an offer in leap-year, unless he is already married, and you are not married, are you, Hugh?" she said, looking mischievously.

When Tix was walking back with Hugh Thurston after lunch, he said—

“What is it about this lady you mention ? Is she really in love with you ? ”

“I am afraid she is, and I am quite distressed about it ; for I consider myself already engaged to Myfanwy, although you may laugh at me.”

“How does the lady show that she is in love ? ”

“She is very attentive to me, and sits close to me, and when she is talking to me she looks up into my eyes, and I can't help blushing. I see a great deal of her, for she has no mother, and is mistress of the house : and she cannot even pass me a cup of tea without looking very peculiarly at me. I feel sometimes as if she would almost compel me to kiss her. I get up and go out of the room suddenly sometimes, for I feel almost like I did when my mother's lady's-maid made me marry her. And yet I am so distressed to think that she loves me so much, and I cannot return it. I am positive she does love me, or she would not behave as she does.”

“How old is she ? ” asked Tix.

“She tells me she is twenty-five.”

“Is she pretty ? ”

"Yes."

"Will Mr Woodford accept me as a guest for an hour this evening after dinner, do you think?"

"I am sure he will."

"And do you think I shall see the lady?"

"Yes; for she is mistress of the house, and is quite mistress of her father too."

When Tix went back to the hotel, he told Ella that he must stay another night in Bath.

"I hope you are not in a hurry to see your new relations, Mrs Tachbrook?"

"It is useless for any one who travels with you to be in a hurry. I suppose you have an adventure on hand?"

"Not exactly. But I am much interested in the young woman who has put young Thurston into such a state of distress by falling in love with him. I fancy I shall get a little fun out of it. Ella, do you mind if I pretend I am single when I call upon old Woodford to-night?"

"Doubly single if you like, Tix."

"That's Irish, Ella."

"Well, you may make the young woman an offer of marriage, on the risk of her bringing

an action for breach of promise. It would be such fun !”

Tix went in the evening to see Woodford. Tix had told Hugh to give a polite message to the old boy from him, intimating that he should call ; and he had hinted to Hugh that if the lady did not know that Tix was married, he need not say he was. He found the lady in the drawing-room with Hugh. She was charmingly dressed, and was very gracious to Tix. The old man was in his study, and Tix, who was a little earlier than he appointed, begged that he might not be disturbed for a time. This gave him an opportunity for becoming friendly with the young lady, which was no difficult task.

“ Ah,” thought Tix to himself, “ just as I thought. A long way from five-and-twenty—five-and-thirty more likely. And poor Hugh thinks her pretty ! Horrid creature ! I’m sure I’ve seen her before. By Jove ! and I remember where too.”

Tix’s judgment of her was a little harsh ; she was not altogether horrid, at least in appearance. She was a tall slight woman, with a profusion of light hair. (“ I’ll swear

it's false," said Tix.) Her complexion looked rather what is termed "got up," and a part of her front hair was cut short and arranged over her forehead to hide some rather deep wrinkles. Her figure looked good, but one was inclined to suspect that the angularity of it was softened down by sundry bits of padding and stuffing.

Isabel was this lady's name.

By the time that Mr Woodford reached the drawing-room, Tix had become quite friendly with Miss Woodford. She presently presided over some tea and coffee, and Hugh was astonished to notice that the same look which was generally bestowed on him with a cup of tea, was on this occasion given to Tix.

Later in the evening, Tix having been persuaded by the fascinating Isabel to stay a little longer, old Woodford left the room, and Tix got up a flirtation, which lasted just long enough to show Hugh that one man was as good as another (and better too, as the Irishman said) in the eyes of Miss Isabel. Hugh walked to the hotel with Tix.

"What a fool you are, Hugh ! I hope you are convinced. The girl is quite ready to

meet me by appointment if I wish it. But I happen to have seen her before, years ago ; she is quite thirty-five. She has a sister who married young, and is now a widow with one daughter ; and I don't know which is the worst, the widow or the daughter. Some years ago a young friend of mine visited the widow, and there met this sister Isabel, and was nearly drawn into marrying her. I interfered just in time to save him. I dare say she has tried to entrap a good many young fellows since. Don't be a fool, Hugh ; remember what an escape you 've had before. I 'm glad I happened to come to Bath—that 's my instinct—I knew I was wanted. You 'll be safe now. If she 's troublesome, say you 're engaged to be married. You haven't long to stay here, and Woodford is a clever old boy, and is doing you good. But it is an odd thing that those clever old boys never know how to manage their daughters. Goodbye, old fellow ; you 'll meet us at Beechampton at Christmas, eh ? ”

“ Yes ; and is Lady Waynflete to be there ? ”

“ Myfanwy, you mean, you rascal. Depends on her behaviour.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE RETURN TO ROTHESCAMP.

“Pereat qui crastina curat.”

THE gathering at Rothescamp was pleasant. Tixover was the very soul of fun, and was indeed almost too witty. Ella made some of the loveliest Irish bulls. That Hibernian epigram is undeservedly despised. When the venerable Earl Russell remarked that something or other was “conspicuous by its absence,” it was clear enough that he had been in Ireland—a fact rendered more obvious by his recent proposal to give that happy island four Parliaments, for the purpose, doubtless, of making-up for the loss of the Church. Fancy a Parliament in Leinster and Munster, Ulster and Connaught!—each

Parliament making bills for the Imperial Parliament to turn into Acts!

The Irish bull is unproducible in perfection by any one not Irish-born, unless, indeed, he is, like Swift, *Hibernicis Hibernior*.

It was an Irishman who wanted to find a place where there was no death, that he might go and end his days there. It was an Irish editor that exclaimed, when speaking of the wrongs of Ireland, "Her cup of misery has been for ages overflowing, and is not yet full." It was an Irish newspaper that said of Robespierre that "he left no children behind him except a brother, who was killed at the same time." It was an Irish coroner who, when asked how he accounted for the extraordinary mortality in Limerick, replied, sadly, "I cannot tell. There are people dying this year that never died before." It was an Irish handbill that announced, with boundless liberality, in reference to a great political demonstration in the Rotunda, that "ladies without distinction of sex would be welcome." Sir Boyle Roche said, "Single misfortunes never come alone, and the greatest of all possible misfortunes is generally fol-

lowed by a much greater." An eminent spirit merchant in Dublin announces in an Irish paper that he has still a small quantity of the whisky on hand which was drunk by George IV. when in Dublin.

There would infallibly be a Sir Boyle Roche in every one of Earl Russell's four Parliaments; and if we lost in legislation, we should assuredly gain in facetiæ. If I am fortunate enough to remember any of Ella's epigrams, I will carefully record them.

The old Doctor found a pleasant companion in Margaret Delisle. There was something quaint and eccentric about her which fitted in with the Doctor's character. Little Adam and Eve were looked upon as curiosities. They were as wild as ever. Margaret was glad to see Seroza again, and to hear her speak.

"What relation shall we be to one another?" said Margaret.

"O, I never could understand relationship," said Seroza.

"I don't think there is any fear of the Tachbrooks dying out now," said the Doctor. "Only a year or two ago I fancied I was the

heir-presumptive to the baronetcy ; for you know, Gilbert, you had quite disappeared, and we thought Tom (we never shall call him anything else) had also quite disappeared. Now there is Tom and Gilbert and Adam, and it is just possible that in a few months there will be a couple more ; so I think, Harold, that you and I must be content to consider ourselves a very young branch of the house."

The old Doctor was quite revived by the pleasant party around him. He began to feel like the famous Countess of Desmond—

"Who lived to the age of a hundred and ten,
And died of a fall from a cherry-tree then."

Nothing is more delightful than to see the old grow young under happy conditions.

Doctor Septimus, influenced while influencing, was the life and soul of the party. He gave them ideas, while he received from them stimulus.

"Grandpapa," said Miranda one day, "you are the youngest of us all, I declare."

"Which is the elder, you or your mamma?" he retorted. "If you are saucy, I shall request your new mamma to punish you ignominiously."

“O yes, I’ll do it,” said Seroza. “You shan’t be treated pertly, papa.”

“Help me, Ella,” said Miranda. “The old gentleman and the little girl are combining against me. I’m the victim of a conspiracy.”

“I like a conspiracy,” said the Viscountess. “It’s so much like a picnic. If I conspired, I should certainly invite all the nice people I know to come and help.”

“And bring hampers,” suggested Mrs Gilbert Tachbrook.

“Capital notion!” exclaimed Tix. “What a new view it gives one of conspiracies! Catiline invites his friends to an oyster-supper when he wants to overthrow the republic—Britannic oysters doubtless. Brutus tries to fatten Cassius—the ‘lean and hungry Cassius’—on tongues of *φοινιχόπτερος*.”

“Ha!” said the Doctor, at once on one of his hobbies, “what does Martial say?”

He took from a shelf Farnaby’s edition of 1615.

“Dat mihi poenae rubens nomen : sed lingua gulosis
Nostra sapit, quid si garrula lingua foret.”

“That’s the real original,” said Tix, “of

the dear old nursery rhyme about four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie—

‘When the pie was opened, the birds began to sing ;
Wasn’t that a pretty dish to set before the king ?’”

“What’s the proper reading of the last stanza ?” asked Tom Jones. “There usually is a little touch of impropriety in those old rhymes—as in ‘Jack and Gill,’ and ‘Little Boy Blue.’ My remembrance of the stanza is—

‘The maid was in the garden, looking very nice :
In came her sweetheart, and kissed her once or twice.’”

“What nonsense !” said Ella. “As if he would have kissed her only once or twice. He’d have devoured her with kisses, you may depend.”

“O, I suppose that’s the way you get treated,” said Miranda. “Some people are not so troublesome.”

“Compare notes, young ladies,” quoth the Doctor. “Bring them to me. I’ll hold an investigation. There are four of you, for I count Seroza as good as married. Let me have evidence as to the respective osculatory tendency of the four gentlemen ; then the

one who is at the head of the list shall be osculated by all of you, and the one at the end of it shall be urticated."

"You use such dreadful words, grandpapa," said Miranda. "I never got into so many syllables when I was a schoolgirl aged ten. What *do* you mean?"

"I mean that the winner in the competition shall be kissed by all the ladies, and the worst man on the list shall be flogged with stinging-nettles. Do you agree?"

"I agree," said Tix. "Urtication is the best cure in the world for rheumatism, and I'm awfully rheumatic, as you know. Till I found that out, I confess I had no idea why God created nettles. Though I do remember that when there was a sneak who told tales at school, we always thrashed him with the *urtica*."

"I'm afraid," said Harold Tachbrook, "we could not carry out this investigation scientifically; because all the ladies will tell stories. No woman will admit that she has had fewer kisses than her competitors. The brag on the subject will be so strong that the venerable judge will have to reverse his first arrange-

ment, and urticate the man who maintains he is most kissative."

"Not a bad plan," said Doctor Septimus.

"Talking of nursery rhymes," said Tix, "I don't think their literature has yet been sufficiently explored. And there are so many stanzas suppressed. Take this one—

'Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockleshells,
And pretty maids all of a row.'

Now that is an obviously Catholic ditty, Doctor. The silver bells, the pilgrim's cockleshells, are enough to show that Mistress Mary meant the Virgin."

"It certainly looks like it," replied Doctor Septimus. "It cannot be otherwise if you examine the other verses, which have vanished from the nurseries, but which still exist in old manuscripts. They were evidently put down by the Protestants."

"What are they?" asked Tom Jones.

"Here is one," replied the Viscount, "if I can only remember it. An old nurse of mine deluged me with nursery rhyme. In fact, she used to severely slap me if I could not remember her classic fragments."

"You must feel the pain now," said Ella.
 "But come, Tix, what's your next verse?"

" 'Mistress Mary, free and airy
 Through your garden the breezes blow ;
 And in deep dim glades the pretty maids
 Make love, as you very well know.' "

"O," exclaimed Miranda.

"Yes, that rhymes," said Tix. "But I want Doctor Tachbrook to tell me whether he considers the verses really adumbrate the worship of the Virgin Mary. Of course I am as orthodox as most members of the Upper House, but I have a sort of sneaking kindness for the Virgin. One wants goddesses."

"Tix, you are incorrigible," said Ella. "If you want a goddess, take me."

"I think your theory about Mistress Mary is accurate," said Doctor Septimus, "if you can authenticate it. Can you? And can you remember any more of it?"

"Well," said Tix, "the last verse is doubtful. I heard it from a little girl who was at school with me. I was at a kind of preparatory school, where children of both sexes went together. This was it—

‘Mistress Mary, still contrary,
Through your garden small streams flow ;
And your sweet bells seven are angels from heaven,
And this is all I know.’ ”

“Queer old rhyme,” said Tom Jones.
“Believe you’ve invented half of it, Tix, if not the whole. However, the theory about Mistress Mary being the Virgin is decidedly ingenious, and somebody had better write to *Notes and Queries* about it.”

“Well,” said Doctor Septimus, “I certainly think something might be made out of the theory. It is a capital idea of yours, Lord Tixover. Shall we write a life of Mistress Mary, from the cradle to the grave?”

“I don’t see why not,” replied Tix. “She had some curious adventures.”

“Where are you going to live, Gilbert, now that your palace has disappeared?” said the Doctor.

“It will take me a long time to get reconciled to another place. I suppose Margaret and I must settle down and civilise the children. We must be near the sea. But there is no hurry. We can stay in London

during the winter. It will be quite a change after the Island of Hawks."

"But you are going to Beechampton with us to spend Christmas first," said Ella, "and after Christmas you must come to Tixover Hall. At Beechampton you will meet Lady Waynflete, such a charming woman, who has been brought up at some odd sort of school, as you were. You will both be capital friends, I am sure, and will be able to exchange experiences of schools. Lady Waynflete's hobby is the employment of women. I wish I had a hobby. Can't somebody recommend me one?"

"Your husband has enough for two," said Miranda.

"I am afraid that women will be employed in so many various ways soon," said Mrs Tachbrook, "that we shall get men only for domestic service."

"I shall not object to that," said Ella; "for I am never better served than on the *Palinoura*. But Lady Waynflete's hobby is employing women of the better classes. She has three young orphan girls to wait on her. I have not quite made out what their

duties are, but I suppose I must, as I have promised Lady Waynflete that I will take three girls in the same capacity myself. I think I had better take some of Tix's distressed damsels."

CHAPTER XXI.

ANOTHER MARRIAGE.

“A pretty girl—

No touch of nonsense in her ; not a touch
Of that frail folly which makes girls go wrong,
Making them, like a fragile porcelain vase,
Lovely in shape, slim waisted; happy coloured,
But like to break at touch of a male finger,
And fain to tempt that touch.”

ROTHESCAMP-ON-THE-HILL was full of life when Harold Tachbrook led his second wife to the altar. He had thought a good deal on this topic beforehand. Of Seroza there was no mistake. She was a lady ; she was a poetic lady. Now a woman may be a very good woman without being a lady ; and a lady may be a very nice or generous or aristocratic lady, without being a poetic lady.

What is a poetic lady ? say you. Such a lady as steps out of a party of our dear

Shakespeare, and is full of poetry without the least knowledge thereof. Rosalind or Portia or Miranda. Poetic ladies are to be met very often, thank God, in this England of ours, and are the sweetest flowers of our race. Race may be tested by its power of developing the heroic gentleman and the poetic lady. Both of these are easy to find among the English. Shall I describe them?

The heroic gentleman is the man who will go anywhere and do anything. Nelson and Wellington were fine recent types of this character. But there are plenty of them at this moment to be found—young fellows fresh from well-deserved flogging at school, who would be first in a breach, and would lead a cavalry charge against the deadliest artillery. Boys I'll find you who will fight to the death, and never do a dishonourable deed. That's the heroic gentleman. That's the male flower of the English folk.

Well, what's the female flower of the English folk? Why, the poetic lady. The woman who *is* what our great poets *imagined*. Could Spenser and Shakespeare have conceived their Una and Rosalind if such

lovable creatures had not existed? No. Have you not met the poetic lady—the flower of English life, whose every word is music, whose every look is light, whose every touch is love? This is the perfection of womanhood. Her the ruler, Artemis the thinker, Aphrodite the lover, blended in one. This is the sort of wife for a man, the sort of queen for a world. She is only to be met among the aristocratic branches of the English race. Remember, however, that aristocracy gets scattered now and then, that great families fall into decadence, that famous names are found among our peasantry. Accident may ruin a noble family—no accident can destroy the strong pure blood which made that family noble.

The Tachbrooks came of a race that always produced brave men and fair women. Their history was not of much notoriety, but all through what is known of it they had been remarkable for one of two things—a love of learning and a love of adventure. There were Tachbrooks who, like Doctor Septimus, absorbed knowledge as the grape absorbed sunshine, and found sufficient mental nutri-

ment in their library and their vicinage. There were other Tachbrooks who, like the two Harolds, could never be flagellated into an average acquaintance with Greek and Latin, but who would go straight away in search of Prester John or the sources of the Nile without an instant's hesitation? In one member of the family, Shirley Tachbrook, a contemporary of Shakespeare, the two peculiarities were blended. His was a chequered life. He made a mistake in marriage, as is too often the case when a man has the poet's fervid imagination. The lady whom he loved was not worth loving, yet he wrote to her some of the most charming sonnets of that poetic age. He transfigured her to a heroine. She was a mere female animal, incapable of understanding him; and when he was away in the Spanish Main searching for adventures and doubloons, she showed it only too practically. It may be said that he should not have left her too long; but those were days when gallant gentlemen went in search of adventure. Sir Francis Drake, says the legend, was so long away from his wife that she deemed herself a

widow, and was about to marry again ; but he, acquainted thereof by magical art, fired a cannon-shot right through the earth, which entered the chancel at the very moment when she was about to say *I will*. The hole in the flooring of St Andrew's, Plymouth, is shown to this day.

Shirley Tachbrook, who had done for his pretty young wife all that a man could do to make her happy, who had left her for only a few months by the Queen's command, came back to find his home desecrated. And the other actor in this wickedness was a page of the household, on whom Shirley Tachbrook could take no other revenge than to order him a flogging. He sent his wife away ; he himself sought wilder adventure on land and sea. His last verses, written the day before he was killed in an attempt to take a heavily armed Spanish galleon, will show the mixture of mirth and melancholy in the man.

To Her Grace ye Queene of England.

" I think that I shall die to-morrow :
 I know that if I die, my Queen
 Will for a moment feel some sorrow,
 'Mid joy serene.

“For her, for England, for my duty,
I would surrender many lives,
All thought of poesy or beauty—
A thousand wives.

“Some fate assures me I am going
Into a clearer purer air :
Thank God that there will be no knowing
Of varlets there.

“Sunk in the sea when fight is fervent,
No funeral will be mine, no bier :
But will my Queen for her poor servant
Drop one royal tear?”

Whether the virgin Queen deigned to drop that single tear which the poet asked is not recorded in history. His presentiment was fulfilled. There is a portrait of him at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill, in the frame whereof is inscribed—

*“Once did I long with love to lie,
But now I only long to dye.”*

In that picture, he is a slender stately gallant melancholy gentleman, with his hand on his sword, and a strange look of regret and desire in his dark eyes.

This famous flower of the Tachbrook race united the two streams of intellectual power which belonged to that race—the stream of daring and the stream of culture. Harold Tachbrook, having decided to marry again,

wondered whether his Seroza would bless him with a boy in whom the complex spirit of Shirley Tachbrook should reappear. The Tachbrooks were justly proud of this ancestor.

"Seroza and I ought to get a son and heir worthy of the old name," Harold was wont to soliloquise. "If I'm rather a fool, my dear old father isn't ; and Seroza is lineally descended from the famous Dr Wallis, the great mathematician. Yes, I rather look forward to a son."

That Eleanor Wallis was a descendant of the famous Savilian Professor was quite clear. Harold, being a believer in race, was all the better pleased with his bride that she had geometric blood in her, though he hated Euclid as much as Professor Sylvester, or as Lord Byron hated Horace. Still, he had a natural respect for that famous Asses' Bridge which has caused such a marvellous consumption of birchwood in Great Britain.

The great day came. The golden chimes of the old crusader rang out upon the air. Those merry bells of Rothescamp were famous for the legendary capacity, mentioned by

Rabelais, of telling you anything you want to know.

“As the fool thinks
So the bell tinks.”

It was firmly believed in Rothescamp that the bells were oracular. When old Mrs Dowden thought of marrying her apprentice, the bells said to her as plainly as ever Highgate bells to Dick Whittington—

“Don’t be a fool ;
Send him to school.”

When old Tom Radstock thought of disinheriting his son (having only a bread-and-cheese fortune to leave him), the bells clearly cried to him—

“If you ’re a knave,
You ’ll turn in your grave.”

He never could get that jingle out of his ears when the bells rang out for prayer or praise. The Reverend Florence Langridge had serious thoughts of committing matrimony with Dinah Harris, a little scrofulous girl, daughter of a blacksmith, who used to teach in the Sunday-school, and was his most enthusiastic patient when he set up a confessional, and answered his curiously analytic

questions with much distinctness, and submitted to his penances with pious resignation. Dinah was almost too much for the Reverend Florence, till one day he heard the bells chime—

“Better resign a wench like Dinah,
Whose abhorrence is Parson Florence,
Only she’s ready and not quite steady.”

The oracular jingle made his ears tingle ; he began to think he was making a fool of himself ; and stopped just short of the point at which he might have been sued for breach of promise.

Bells that are thus wise in their advice are of great use in a village. On the occasion of Harold Tachbrook’s wedding to Seroza they spake very wisely indeed. Their sayings must be deferred while I briefly describe the marriage. Harold, whose love for his native village we have known, had arranged that his wife, a waif of the Island of Hawks, should be attended at church by twelve bridesmaids, all villagers, whom he carefully selected for their good conduct, and to every one of whom he presented a hundred pounds on their marriage. Harold had his confessional as well as the Reverend Florence, but it was in the

open air instead of the vestry, and was healthy instead of morbid. He knew everybody in the village, man and woman, boy and girl. He never allowed poverty to punish too severely those who were willing to work. He went into a cottage with a courtesy its inhabitants could not help feeling, and talked to them just as if he were their equal. If he saw a rustic boy going a little wild, he would take the trouble to lecture him as if he were a son of his own. If he saw a peasant girl getting flighty, as these little fools will when their looking-glass begins to show them softening hair and ruddy cheeks and budding breasts, he scolded her with a tender severity which made her ashamed of her silliness. Harold's motto was the famous line of Terence—

“Homo sum : nihil humanum a me alienum puto.”

Those twelve pretty (and good) peasant bridesmaids caused quite an excitement in the neighbourhood. Harold was married by Doctor Tachbrook's old friend, Archdeacon Coningsby, the highest and cleverest Churchman in England; and when the noble old

Archdeacon saw these buxom lasses surrounding the bride, a delicate creature, who looked as if made by a magician of sea-foam, he said—

“Tachbrook, you have proved yourself a true scion of your family. You all do odd things well. I shall start this fashion of rustic bridesmaids. It will be an admirable way of connecting the gentle folk with the commonalty.”

That Sir Harold Tachbrook (who complains that he will be Tom Jones to the end of his life) gave a noble festival at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill is unnecessary to be said. The old ale of the family, walled up for two decades, caused universal delight. Under the plate of every tenant was a ten-pound note. Minor festivity, but not less joyous, was arranged for the peasantry at the “Tachbrook Arms,” under the arrangement of Sandy Mac. Not the men only, but also the women and children, were feasted and received presents. As to the bridesmaids, who had been chosen specially for their good behaviour, they came to the wedding breakfast, and Archdeacon Coningsby proposed their

health. Whoso knows the Archdeacon knows that no man in England can say a keener thing or a tenderer. At this time he wound up by saying—

“My friend Tachbrook has been both wise and kind. I heartily hope his example may be followed. I heartily hope you will all soon require those marriage portions he promises you. I ask every one to drink your health. I will not call you young ladies, but something much better—*good girls*.”

Harold and Seroza remained at Rothescamp-on-the-Hill until late in the evening, joining in the fun and dancing. There was plenty of fun. Tix insisted on dancing with all the bridesmaids in turn. Mrs Dering's daughter was one of them; but she was a little more steady than when she danced with Tix a year ago, for she was going to be married to a young farmer. Tix chaffs her on the probability of being the first to receive her marriage-portion.

“I hope you will find everything right at my place, Harold,” said Tix.

“Yes, I am sure to be pleased with everything but the absence of Ella and yourself.”

“O, we shall follow you in a few days ; we shall just give you time to shake down together, and have a few quarrels.”

Where do you suppose Harold and Seroza spent the first night of their honeymoon ? It was so unromantic. They just went quietly home to Doctor Septimus, and listened to the chime of the magical golden Rothescamp bells. And the bells said—

“You love each other. But which is fonder ?

Who can know ? who can know ?

You stay at home, nor wish to wander ;

Wherefore so ? wherefore so ?

“We have often for a Tachbrook carolled,

Many a tide, many a tide ;

Have rung clear peals for many a Harold,

And his bride, and his bride.

“There is often truth in our noisy clashes ;

Love your pet, love your pet.

Love, love, love, till the world 's in ashes :

That 's not yet, that 's not yet.”

This is what Harold and Seroza heard the bells say as they lay in bed at Rothescamp-in-the-Valley. The most poetic bells become a bore on one's wedding-night. This remark is copyright.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROTHESCAMP ELECTION.

“Anglia, mons, fons, pons, ecclesia, foemina, lana.”

“England, amongst all nations, is most full
Of hills, wells, bridges, churches, women, wool.”

“AVOID beans,” said Pythagoras to his followers : and it is the opinion of Coleridge, and several other high authorities, that this meant avoidance of the ballot-box, whereinto white and black were placed to indicate votes. If the author of “Barnabae Itinerarium,” whose motto introduces this chapter, had lived in our days, he would have been obliged to add ballot-balls to the things for which England is celebrated. For my own part, I have so far benefited posterity as to dig one well and to plant many trees ; but I will never vote by ballot. Why are the Whig-Radicals so dread-

fully afraid of the voting-paper ? Let us have that and female suffrage together. That would be truly liberal. The ballot is in the interest of bribery and cowardice.

Paul Fossett, under Sir Harold Tachbrook's orders, accepted the Chiltern Hundreds—or, to speak with absolute accuracy, the Stewardship of the Manor of Poynings. He had been a warming-pan originally. He liked the House of Commons, as do many men of the same calibre. It is pleasant to smoke on the terrace and lounge in the library, and feel yourself dignified. As to catching the Speaker's eye, that was a thing of which Mr Fossett never thought, and wherein he certainly would never have succeeded. Even the burlier member for London-super-Mare cannot do it.

Strangely enough, and very much to the surprise of the two Harolds, the vacated seat for Rothescamp caused a contested election. It happened thus. The Honourable Aquila Powys, younger brother of the Earl of Glamorgan, was anxious to become a statesman, feeling confident of office, for the admirable reason that he had ratted. Lord Glamorgan

took a double-first at Oxford, and has been a Cabinet Minister, and is the representative of a great family, and possesses at Beauclerc one of the loveliest parks in England, with a lake fringed by rhododendrons, and an island thereon (almost as beautiful as Belle Isle on Windermere), where there is a charming pavilion, which the Earl often lends to an artist or a poet or a honeymooning couple. Lord Glamorgan's younger brother is of quite another type. He had been private secretary to a Tory minister; but it suddenly occurred to him the world wanted reforming, and that he was the man to do it. So, to the amazement of his brother, and of such other people as thought there was a slight touch of sanity in him, away he rushed at a tangent. His notions of reform were rather crude. His chief article of political faith was, that a happy time must come when every cottage in England will contain a piano. We should soon have to say, with Caliban, "The isle is full of noises."

When it was announced that Mr Paul Fossett was M.P. no longer, it occurred to Rabbetts, the well-known Whig-Radical agent,

that perchance a vote might be gained there. And here was a promising young gentleman, with *satis eloquentiae, sapientiae parum*, who was quite ready to go into Parliament as representing the great piano interest. The affair was soon arranged. The Honourable Aquila Powys came down to Rothescamp with money in his pocket from Victoria Street, and advocated piano reform. Indeed, I think he had a grand piano down from Cramer's or Chappell's, and got the girls of the village to try its tinkling. As the Quaker in Poole's farce says—

“ While the lads of the village shall merrily ha !
 Sound the tabors, I'll hand thee along ;
 And I say unto thee, that verily, ha !
 Thou and I will be first in the throng.”

So the Honourable Aquila might have sung (save that his voice was more qualified for speaking than singing)—

“ When the ballot-balls rattle so tenderly ha !
 In our last new political way,
 If I meet with a lass that moves slenderly ha !
 I'll teach her piano to play.”

With what our plain-spoken forefathers would have called a grand gift of the gab,

the Honourable Aquila held meetings at Rothescamp, talking interminably. What annoyed him and his London agent was, that there appeared no tangible opposition. Harold, on his father's part, had just issued this handbill—

“BURGESSES OF ROTHESCAMP,

If you think me worthy of the trust, I desire to represent you in Parliament.

SEPTIMUS TACHBROOK.”

That was all. The old Doctor would not condescend to any statement of opinion, to any flattery, to any public meetings.

“If they don't like me,” he said, “let them have that boy with his pianos. It is a capital experiment *in corpore vili*.”

The boy with the pianos talked—O! how he talked! He canvassed with intensity. He admired all the babies of Rothescamp. He would have kissed all the pretty girls, but they boxed his ears—especially the bridesmaids. But what amazed Rabbetts of Victoria Street, who had come down with his client, and was obliged to stay at the “Tach-

brook Arms" (where Sandy Mac gave them loyally the most undrinkable wine), was that there were so few symptoms of opposition. All their brilliant and vigorous electioneering brought no reply. Only at intervals, when canvassing the bucolic lout, they would get this sort of answer :—

" Well, it do sound main fine ; and I should like my Sairey Jane to have a pianner and play like a young lady. But I means to vote for the old Doctor."

Which was discouraging. But in truth there was hardly a voter in the village who would not have done what the old Doctor told them. Many a long year he had been their best friend ; and his son Harold, on his return with plenty of money, had spent it wisely, yet without stint, upon his native village. As to Tom Jones, lord of the manor, he was popular beyond measure ; and our Miranda, Lady Tachbrook, was at home in every house in Rothescamp. So one day, when Miranda and Seroza and the two Harolds were talking of the election, this conversation occurred.

Tom Jones.—" Do you think it worth

while asking people how they mean to vote, old fellow?"

Harold.—"Not a bit. I know how they'll vote, ballot-box, notwithstanding. Besides, the governor wouldn't hear of it. It is hard work to get the dear old boy into Parliament; and I shall have to take great care of him when he gets there."

Seroza.—"I'll take care of him, sir. I'm prouder of him than I am of you."

Harold.—"That child wants whipping. Miranda. Why don't you protect your father?"

Miranda.—"O, it's all very fine, papa; but if you will give me a cruel stepmother, I must take the consequences. I can't describe to you what a wicked little vixen she is."

Seroza.—"O Miranda!"

"Well, mamma," says Miranda, rising and making a mock curtsy, "you know its true."

It was a little comedy, of course. The girls liked making fun of each other. When it was over Harold said—

"Let's go down to the village, Tom. I

don't want to canvas anybody, but I think we may as well drop in at the 'Tachbrook Arms,' or we may lose Sandy Mac's allegiance."

They went. They were seen that evening by the Honourable Aquila Powys and Mr Rabbetts, of the famous firm of Fox, Wolff, and Rabbetts. They had no converse with these people, but they talked in their presence to some of the village folk—payers of scot-and-lot, and pot-wallopers. They did not ask for a vote; they merely amused themselves.

The great day came at last. The Doctor did not trouble to appear. The balloting business was simple enough in a small borough of between two and three hundred registered electors; it was hardly worth the attention of Messrs Fox, Wolff, and Rabbetts, seeing that the Honourable Aquila Powys, notwithstanding his advocacy of the ubiquitous piano, got only three votes.

Of course he came and thanked the electors, and assured them that he was determined to get into Parliament to urge the great piano question. But some wicked wag (I am sadly

afraid it was Tix) had sent to London for a couple of hundred organ-grinders, every one of whom ground a different tune during the Honourable Aquila's eloquation. The result was rapturous.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BEECHAMPTON CASTLE.

“Here’s Lord Tresham’s self !
There now—there’s what a nobleman should be !
He’s older, graver, loftier ; he’s more like
A house’s head !”

BEECHAMPTON gathered his guests to Christmas revelry, and invented for them joyous absurdities. The chill Christmas tide grows merrier in a great castle, where frost is unfelt and roar of wind unheard, where the mighty blaze of oaken logs makes a summer within that defies the winter without.

Beechampton Castle, with dreadful dungeons beneath it, and awe-laden legends of murdered kings, is the very place for a winter night—if only you have a bedfellow. To mention a bedfellow is wicked, I am

aware ; but such institutions exist. Indeed, I remember sleeping with my grandmother.

The whole party met at Beechampton Castle, and the Earl made Ella hostess ; for between Ella and the Earl was that charming relation which is so pleasant to perceive between an old gentleman and a young lady—using the words *gentleman* and *lady* in their higher sense. So our little Viscountess entertained the company, and her pretty shoulders and pretty manners were much admired, and she was quite the belle of the party, making Miranda jealous. For Miranda, having had a romantic time of it, from her birth to her marriage, was a little given to expect romantic incidents. Just listen to the two young folk talking in Lady Tixover's dressing-room. They are dressing for dinner this winter evening ; but there is plenty of time.

Miranda.—"Do you want your dinner, Ella ? I like dining here, because the Earl always has such lots of venison and game, and they are deliciously digestible."

Ella.—"I quite agree with you. Lord Beechampton is just like the dinners he gives you. He is *so* digestible."

Miranda.—"I wasn't thinking of digesting him, but I think you are right. Nothing that he says is ever by any chance unpleasant. If he sometimes makes a naughty little joke, it is never nasty. He is more like Prior than Swinburne, more like Sterne or Landor than anybody else I know. The girl who, after a certain age—I don't mean mere babies, you know—can't enjoy a little epigrammatic wickedness, is simply a fool. Don't you think so?"

Ella.—"O, I am very correct, and don't know the meaning of wickedness. Still I think you are quite right, Miranda, my dear. I like a little harmless healthy fun. I dare say we shall get some here."

They did. Beechampton was determined to make Christmas at the Castle glorious. So he asked all the world for leagues around; and he made Tixover master of the revels. And Tixover, never at a loss, introduced revels such as Beechampton Castle might have seen in the twelfth century. There was all the old-fangled mummary of Robin Hood, and Maid Marian, which delighted our merrier ancestors, but which has dropt out of the

memory of their more stolid descendants. Tix, who liked a little fun, took counsel with Lady Waynflete, who had brought with her Myfanwy and the two other little orphan girls from the asylum ; and much amusement was produced by a kind of impromptu comedietta they made between them, called " Three to One," in which Hugh Thurston was dressed in feminine apparel, and called Miss Hughes, while the three girls made love to him, one as an officer, another as a parson, another as a young squire. Beechampton roared with laughter at Tix's rascally witticisms, and at seeing the transformation. Myfanwy, who played the soldier, and looked quite a funny little cornet in red coat and white breeches and long boots with spurs in the heels, with a sword by her side, did the business delightfully. But O ! you should have seen Hugh Thurston's inextricable difficulties with his petticoats.

Myfanwy and the two other girls had never imagined such fun possible ; nor indeed, brought up in a sordid asylum, had they formed an idea of so noble a place as Beechampton Castle ; nor, again, having got their

ideas of men from stout City Stocking-makers, had they deemed it possible that such men as they saw around them could exist—men wise in their youth, like Tix and the two Harolds; men young in their age, like Lord Beechampton and Doctor Septimus Tachbrook.

Between these last there occurred a colloquy.

The Doctor.—"I am going into Parliament next session. It is late to begin. What shall I propose of the innumerable things that want proposing?"

The Earl.—"Make hypocrisy felony, and repeal the malt-tax. I don't know anything else to suggest at the moment. I should like a treaty of copyright with America, but the Americans are such fools that they prefer coppers to literature."

The Doctor.—"I expect the people in the House will regard me as an octogenarian nuisance, but I mean to let them hear my voice for all that. It was my madcap son who would have me go into Parliament, and as I am in for it, I'll try if I can enlighten the blockheads of that assembly, which I think very doubtful. They won't listen to reason. They want to

be bullied, Cromwellised. They can't legislate as gentlemen ought to legislate, with a few epigrammatic words expended on every Act of Parliament. They must talk, talk, talk, till the very reporters strike, and a deal of their talk is happily lost altogether. No man ever did any good with such a flood of eloquence—such a tremendous river of declamation. No, it is unendurable. When I go up, I mean to give them new ideas in few words”

The Earl.—“My dear Doctor, I am delighted. I shall back up all your ideas in the Upper House, and I am sure Tix will.”

Adam and Eve and little Lady Mary Waynflete were very happy together. They thought they would like it to be always Christmas at Beechampton. Mrs Gilbert Tachbrook and Lady Waynflete became great friends, and amused Ella very much with their different experiences of school-life. There were many pleasant meetings over dressing-room fires before dinner amongst the ladies, and plenty of pretty jokes. Hugh Thurston managed to find

occasions to give Myfanwy a kiss, and assurance of his eternal fidelity. Myfanwy thought it very wrong to be kissed, or to listen to him, but she rather liked it, nevertheless. Hugh had brought her a beautiful little ring to wear to remind her that she belonged to him. This ring was quite a weight upon her mind for a few days, as she wanted to tell Lady Waynflete about it, and did not dare to do so. When her Ladyship saw it, she said it was a pretty little ring, and advised Myfanwy to wear it, remarking, "Hugh Thurston is, I think, a noble young fellow; you need not be ashamed of his love." So the little girl is happy.

One night the four brides of the year appeared at dinner in their wedding-dresses; and on another evening, when there was a fancy-dress ball, the four brides dressed in bridal costume of other countries, each different.

Meanwhile what was Tix doing? He was the life and soul of the party, but he found time to be sentimental, and made some love rhymes to his wife. Fancy Tix being sentimental! One evening, as they were lounging

in a conservatory after a dance, Tix gave Ella these lines :—

“ O Ella ! darling little wife,
With whimsical sweet way ;
I have been happy all my life,
I ’m happier to-day.

“ Two things delight me—love and strife—
Fierce fight or love’s light play :
I ’ll fight no more ; I ’ll love my wife
And be her slave to-day.

“ So let the world with fools be rife,
And let the fools have sway ;
The man who has a loving wife
Is happier than they.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN PARLIAMENT.

“ Upon Reform such time and talk were spent,
Men hoped to see a People's Parliament.
What is the truth? The old, old story still—
Wide-incomed Smith beats narrow-minded Mill.
Brewers and bankers, men of odious omen,
Auriferous fellows of immense abdomen,
Flashy Directors with their diamond rings—
Such are the mass of our six hundred kings.”

DOCTOR SEPTIMUS TACHBROOK was of quite another sort from that described by the satirist. When he entered the House, older than any man there, he created a feeling of surprise—what fools who cannot invent a phrase called a “sensation.” The noble old man, with white hair and beard, tall, as is the habit of his family, looked superb in an assembly where Gladstone and Lowe are

thought remarkable. Calmly he walked into the House ; calmly also he took his seat below the gangway on the Opposition side. Not so calm was the First Minister (famed destroyer of hats) when the Doctor brought in a bill for the appointment of a Minister of Public Health.

“ I am too old to attempt eloquence or prolixity,” said the honourable Member for Rothescamp ; “ but if there is any one here who thinks health unimportant, he is a greater fool than I could have imagined even in the House of Commons.”

“ Order ! order ! ”

“ I beg leave to apologise. I presume I ought not to have thought any supremacy possible beyond the limits of this chamber. Allow me to proceed by saying, that I have had much experience of English health, and that I have seen it absolutely thrown away, because there is no one with power to interfere and make the officers of health do their duty. In our cities these things are bad, in our villages they are far worse ; but people manage to live in villages because they have free intercourse with open air. I take it that

a Minister of Public Health is needed ; and I think it would be as well to choose a gentleman with some slight touch of courtesy about him, which of late years seems not to have been deemed important."

Mr Summertop, a fluent Government subaltern of about twenty-three, was put up to answer the Doctor, and did his best to show that unpleasant smells were wholesome. Summertop has logic enough to prove anything, but did not succeed in making out his case on this occasion. The Government were beaten by three ; but there never was a Government that took beating so amiably. Christianity is an excellent thing, but they "turn the other cheek" almost too often.

Oddly enough, Tixover that very same night brought in his motion for the appointment of a Minister of Public Charity, which of course the Government resisted.

"There is nothing," said Tixover, in his determined way, "that is more abominably wasted than the generous charity of the English people. It is the prey of parasites, the spoil of shopkeepers. Thousands of people are there who, with more money than they

want, would gladly help others, but see no way of doing it. They are drawn into some wretched voluntary society. They believe themselves to be doing good, though they have no opportunity of strict inquiry. If they inquired, some dexterous secretary would throw sand in their eyes. To see charity prostituted for the benefit of tradesmen, injuring unfortunate children who are supposed to obtain great advantages, is to me unendurable. If Her Majesty's ministers can tolerate it, I am sorry for Her Majesty. For such ministers no gentleman could have sorrow."

Tix got a rejoinder from a ministerial marquis and a majority. So let us hope that before the end of the century, before the disestablishment of all Churches, we may perchance get a Minister of Health and a Minister of Charity.

You should have heard three ladies chattering, as they breakfasted in Park Lane, over the speeches as reported in the *Times*.

Miranda.—"My dear grandpapa! How well he spoke! He was quite like a young man. I do hope he'll go on trying to put

common sense into those men that govern the country."

Seroza.—"I wish I could make Harold go into Parliament. Couldn't you induce him, Miranda dear?"

Miranda.—"No, I don't think I could, mamma. But we shall be very well represented with the Earl and Tix in one House, and grandpapa in the other. I am quite delighted at such parliamentary power. I begin to think that we three shall help to govern the realm."

Ella.—"With Margaret to help!"

Miranda.—"You must leave Margaret alone now, as she means to prolong the race of Tachbrook. How absurd! As if already there were not enough of us."

Ella.—"Tix would say there can't be too much of a good thing."

Seroza.—"And I should tell you to behave properly, my dear Miranda, and not mention such things."

Miranda.—"Isn't my stepmother getting dreadfully tyrannical?"

Ella.—"Isn't she? We're two to one. Suppose we inflict appropriate punishment?"

At which point Ella, a little Irish girl with strenuous wrists, caught Seroza's hands in hers. I don't know what might have occurred if Seroza had not exclaimed—

“O, I will be good! I will, indeed!”

THE END.

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